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IOWA BIRD LIFE

The Iowa Ornithologists' Union, founded in 1923, encourages interest in the identification, study, and protection of birds in Iowa and seeks to unite those who have these interests in common. Iowa Bird Life and IOU News are quarterly publications of the Union.

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A major irruption of Snowy Owls into Iowa, winter 2011–12

Paul Hertzel and Stephen J. Dinsmore

During the winter of 2011–12, an historic irruption of Snowy Owls (*Bubo scandiacus*) occurred in North America. Significant numbers of birds dispersed from the Arctic in the fall and were recorded at locations south through the Canadian Provinces and into much of the United States for the duration of the winter season. While these circumstances are not unusual, the magnitude of the 2011–12 event, especially in the Midwest and Great Plains regions, was noteworthy. In Iowa, the number of distinct reports was the most in 35 years.

BACKGROUND

Annually, a percentage of the Snowy Owl population withdraws from the Arctic breeding grounds seeking suitable winter regions that resemble the flat, open topography of the tundra landscape. The numbers of birds involved in this withdrawal and the extent of the movement varies from year to year (Parmelee 1992). The classic explanation for the variation in this migration was detailed by V. E. Shelford and later by A. O. Gross, and links the magnitude of the movement to the presence or absence of prey species in the Arctic, particularly lemmings (Shelford 1945, Gross 1947). Plentiful prey results in increased clutch sizes of the Snowy Owl and a corresponding increase in the population, while decreases in the prey population result in larger and more distant dispersals of Snowy Owls. Since fluctuations in the lemming population are consistent and cyclic, the Snowy Owl population exhibits an associated pattern, with particularly pronounced irruptions southward following severe drops in the lemming population.

The simplicity of this explanation is attractive, but in practice, irruptions of the owls into southern regions do not match up convincingly to cycles in the lemming population, which are seldom in agreement across the entire population. Furthermore, winter densities of Snowy Owls are not consistent across the winter range. More recently, a refinement of this theory was offered by Kerlinger, and others, in which the wide expanses of the Canadian Great Plains are seen to provide a permanent and stable winter home to the owl population which, in turn, shows little resonance with the lemming fluctuations. Instead, peripheral areas to the east, west and south display dramatic swings in their Snowy Owl winter densities that fit the cyclic irruption model but only for associated areas to the north. They write, “We believe that the tundra would be more realistically viewed as a mosaic of patches varying in size, lemming abundance, and timing of fluctuations” (Kerlinger et al. 1985). Thus, so-called irruptions in the Snowy Owl population are better described as local or regional and take on more continental proportions only rarely, perhaps when declines in the populations of patchily distributed lemmings coincide.

The Snowy Owl irruption of 2011–12 was widespread and massive in some areas, but was not record-setting across all areas. For instance, eBird coordinated real time counts

of birds across the continent throughout the period. In the eastern U. S., they documented hundreds of sightings, but even with some possible double-counting, their numbers did not approach the 2043 owls reported in New England during the winter of 1945–

46 (Gross 1947). In that year, 930 were counted in Maine alone, an impressive number. In the irruption of 1926–27, a count of 592 Snowy Owls was recorded in Michigan (Gross 1927), far more than in any year since.

So, although the scope of the irruption extended to eastern provinces and states, its presence there was not historically remarkable. On the other hand, in the Midwest and Great Plains, the numbers of Snowy Owls were closer to record totals, suggesting a large, perhaps centralized source for the irruption, in alliance with Kerlinger's model. Indeed, many wandering birds that found themselves in the traditional Canadian Great Plains region may have been forced south by earlier arrivals who had already established winter territories there, thus creating a steady influx into the northern Great Plains.

In addition to its dense center, the irruption was very widespread, including noteworthy concentrations of individuals along the Pacific Coast, and one hapless but now famous individual that became a first record for the Hawaiian Islands. It showed up at the Honolulu International Airport on 24 November 2011 (S. Conant, University of Hawai'i at Manoa, pers. comm.) and is now a specimen at the Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum in Honolulu.

IOWA SNOWY OWLS

The impact of this irruption on the Iowa landscape was significant. Not since the 1976–77 winter season have so many of these northern visitors been reported in the state. At least 154 distinct sightings were documented beginning with one on 7 November 2011 in O'Brien County and ending with one on 10 March 2012 in Woodbury County. This period spans 125 days, making an average of 5 new individuals located every 4 days. By comparison, the last noteworthy spike in the winter presence of Snowy Owls in Iowa occurred in 2005–06 when 19 were recorded over the entire season (Hertzel 2006), the most since the 21 in 1993–94.

In tracking the Iowa component of the irruption, considerable effort was made to avoid recounting particular individuals. While a total of 206 reports make up the database for this compilation, only 154 are considered here as unique individuals. Each of the other 52 reports either is believed a duplicate sighting of a previously recorded individual, or remains unconfirmed as a Snowy Owl. In making these judgments, we were aided by the

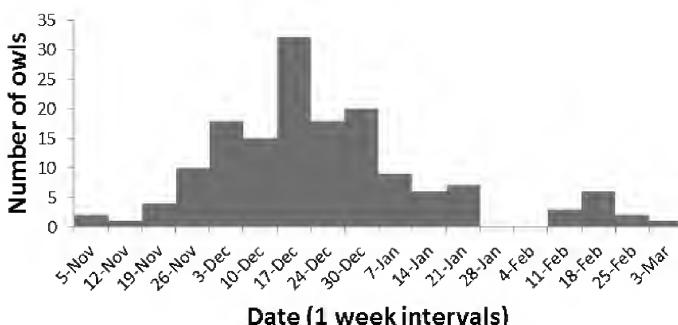


Figure 1. First detections of Snowy Owls in 1-week intervals in Iowa, winter 2011–12.

timely actions of many diligent field observers, the ease and speed of sharing information via the Internet, and the ability of digital photography to provide immediate, lasting, high-quality, visual documentation.

Although new sightings averaged more than one per day over the course of the season, this is not a good description of the distribution of owls over time. Most sightings (91) occurred in December, with more than half of these (53) occurring in the 14-day period 13–26 December (Figure 1). The peak day was 23 December when at least 8 new individuals were recorded.

Snowy Owls were first reported in November, which is the final month of the ornithological fall season. The first, on 7 November, was not especially early given that Snowy Owls occasionally appear in Iowa in October. However, it marked the beginning of a steady influx of owls at a rate not seen in the state for 35 years. The 14 recorded in November were the most in fall since 1976, when 29 were reported in a compilation coordinated by Gladys Black (Halmi 1977). By ornithological season, the distribution of occurrences was as follows: 14 in fall (August–November), 138 during winter (December–February), and 2 in spring (March–May).

The principal arrival of owls occurred in December, in a fashion resembling a statistically normal distribution, peaking late in the month, trailing off in January and disappearing temporarily after January 27 (Figure 1). It seems likely this date marked the end of the influx of dispersing owls searching for suitable winter habitat. There followed a 14-day absence of new reports during which time owls were still being seen, but all were easily identifiable as previously recorded individuals. Then, starting on 11 February, a small resurgence of reports of new owls occurred, and lasted about a month (Figure 1). The indication is that these birds mark the surviving individuals' initial movements to return north. These final twelve reports, while considered new sightings, may have been repeats of earlier-counted individuals now on a new trajectory north, but there is no way to be sure. In any case, the last new sighting, on 10 March in Woodbury County, was also the last owl seen in the state.

Although 42 of the 99 counties in Iowa had no confirmed records, the geographical distribution of the Snowy Owls can be considered as blanketing the state. In the west, many owls were found along the Missouri River within sight of Nebraska. In Clinton County in the east, there were two records from locations farther east than La Crosse, Wisconsin or Quincy, Illinois. Each of the counties in the four corners of the state, Fremont, Lyon, Allamakee and Lee, had at least one visit from an owl, including the southernmost bird found and photographed 19 December 2011 perched on a duck blind in the Mississippi River at Montrose.

The widespread distribution, however, was not homogeneous in density, with considerably more birds found in the west than in the east (Figures 2 and 3). In fact, the extreme westernmost tier of counties along the Missouri River accounted for nearly one fourth (23.4%) of all reports and included the two counties with the most records. Both Woodbury and Fremont counties had at least ten distinct records, with that number being our most conservative analysis to avoid double-counting individuals. When the state is divided into three approximately equal regions west to east, with 33 counties in each region, the distribution by region decreases significantly from west to east. More than half of all

sightings (53%) occurred in the western third, about 36% occurred in the central region, and about 11% occurred in the east (Figure 2). More than half of the 42 counties without records lie in the eastern third, and many of these counties are traditionally under-represented in the quarterly field report process. So, the absence of records from these counties is likely due to the combination of fewer birds present and fewer hours spent looking rather than an actual absence of owls.

Identifying Snowy Owls in the field is straightforward, and we considered and discarded only three instances of mistaken species in 206 reports. But ageing and sexing owls in the field is a less reliable task. Juvenile females, the heaviest marked birds, and adult males, the purest white birds, are generally easy to confirm. It's the other two classes, juvenile males and adult females, which contain plumage similarities and overlapping features (Parmelee 1992). Still, with clear photos from the right angle, individuals of the latter two categories may sometimes be identified with nearly as much confidence as one held in the hand. Of 81 birds aged, 72 were judged to be juveniles (89%). This fits well with an examination of museum skins that showed participants in irruptive movements outside traditional, northern wintering grounds were primarily first-year birds (Kerlinger 1986). Of 63 birds sexed, 42 were judged to be female and 21 were judged to be male.

Mortality in the Iowa component of the irruption was probably quite high. At least 33 are known to have died. Wildlife rehabilitator Kay Neumann (SOAR) dealt with eight stressed or injured birds, six of which died in spite of careful treatment (pers. comm.). Of

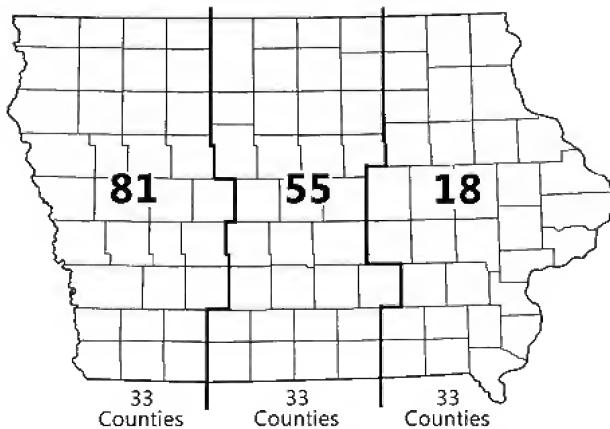


Figure 2. The distribution of Snowy Owls in the western, central, and eastern thirds of Iowa, winter 2011–12.

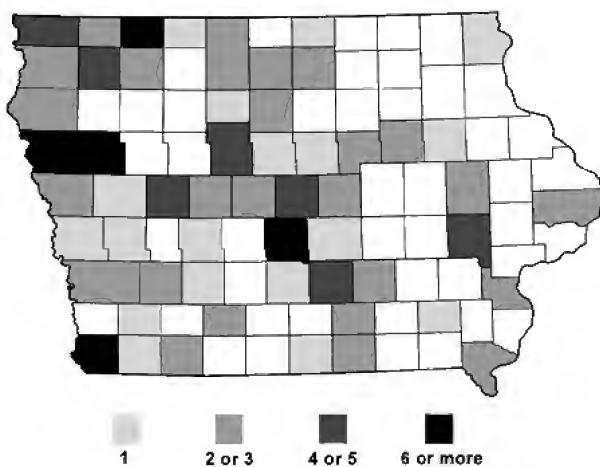


Figure 3. The number of Snowy Owl records by county in Iowa, winter 2011–12.

the remaining two, only one was released back into the wild. Seven other birds brought to her were already dead or died en route. If our interpretation of the distribution map over time (Figure 1) is correct, then it is not surprising that the late season, northbound birds were far fewer in numbers than the early arrivals; many or most of the latter were probably deceased.

The historical high count for Snowy Owls in Iowa is 206 reported by Gladys Black in a compilation of the 1976–77 season (Halmi 1977). That total was matched by the number of reports we received during the 2011–12 season. However, we set aside 52 of the reports as duplicates, or unsubstantiated identifications, so that only 154 are offered as verified. In 1977, Black gave no additional details of her compilation beyond the total of 206, which leaves some uncertainty about how the irruption of 2011–12 compares to the 1976–77 event.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We are grateful to the many people who contributed timely reports of Snowy Owls last winter. Many reports also included a photo, which greatly aided us when trying to determine the age and sex of each bird. Bruce Ehresman (Iowa Department of Natural Resources) and Christina Roelofs (Naturalist, Shelby and Audubon County Conservation Boards) forwarded many sightings from their colleagues, and Kay Neumann (SOAR) kindly provided details on birds that were submitted for rehabilitation.

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Field Reports—Spring 2012

Matthew C. Kenne



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WEATHER

The spectacular conditions this season generated extensive media coverage, and brought thoughts of climate change to those who hadn't previously given the topic much consideration. March temperatures went beyond record-setting, for example, the 17th through the 19th averaged more than 30 degrees above normal! The heat continued into early April, with 93 degrees at Sioux City on the 1st breaking the record for the highest temp so early in the season. Because of the warmth, the flowering of plants and emergence of leaves and insects ran ahead of normal by almost a month in many cases. An almost statewide freeze occurred April 10th and

11th, trashing flowers and requiring trees to re-leaf. In my area, maples were sufficiently hardened to withstand the freeze, but ashes and oaks were hard-hit. Precipitation kept pace across the state during April, but (unfortunately, as it turned out) it did nothing to replenish low groundwater levels. Despite the usual fluctuations, this May finished as the 14th warmest on record. The month of May averaged an inch less rainfall than normal, concentrated in the first week and then again late in the month, and predominately in the northwest. Although there were a few tornadoes this spring, most notably at Thurman and Creston on April 14th, severe storms were few in number because of the extended warm and dry spells. There was no snow or sleet reported between March 7 at Des Moines and April 28 at Strawberry Point, and no freezing temps at all in May.

HABITAT, GENERAL TRENDS

Among waterfowl, the low counts of Tundra Swans and Canvasbacks are curious. Canvasback's spring staging area on the Mississippi River normally hosts one of the major migratory spectacles in this area- not something that usually goes unreported if witnessed.

It's hard to imagine Iowa being considered "Neotropic", but if continued, the range expansion of Neotropic Cormorants and Glossy Ibis will soon make them a regular part of our avifauna. Throw in Mottled Duck, and there's a definite "Gulf Coast" feeling in the air.

Drying conditions and the DNR's shallow-lake restoration projects provided good shorebird feeding conditions at a number of locations. It will be interesting to compare pre-drought spring locations and shorebird usage with post-drought locations of the fall migration season to come.

A few large white-headed gulls, Snowy Owls, and winter finches hung on into the

spring season, but just barely. Longspurs, on the other hand, didn't bother to stop when they passed through.

The conditions affected passerine migrants in varying ways. The stalwarts of cool, early April birding trips, e.g., Golden-crowned Kinglet, Winter Wren, and Fox Sparrow, left early or didn't stop at all. The early southeastern warblers like Yellow-throated, Northern Parula, and Louisiana Waterthrush, arrived crazy early. There were 28 species of warblers known from the state by 2 May, an incredible total for so early in the season.

UNUSUAL SPECIES

The Accidental or Casual species encountered this spring were: Mottled Duck, Neotropic Cormorant, Glossy Ibis, Whimbrel, Curlew Sandpiper, California Gull, Iceland Gull, Burrowing Owl, Black-billed Magpie and Bewick's Wren (both at regular locations), Green-tailed Towhee, and the lingering Bullock's Oriole at Ottumwa.

Other notable birds included: Yellow-crowned Night Herons, an unfortunate Barn Owl, Scissor-tailed Flycatchers, good numbers of Smith's Longspurs, likely nesting Pine Warblers, and nesting Pine Siskins.

The list of early arrivals in this record-setting spring is impressive: Great Egret, Sora, American Golden Plover, Spotted Sandpiper, Greater Yellowlegs, Upland Sandpiper, Hudsonian Godwit, Ruddy Turnstone, Long-billed Dowitcher, Caspian Tern, Forster's Tern, Whip-poor-will, Western Kingbird, Warbling Vireo, Red-eyed Vireo, Tree Swallow, House Wren, Sedge Wren, Marsh Wren, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Gray Catbird, Louisiana Waterthrush, Orange-crowned Warbler, Mourning Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, Northern Parula, Yellow-throated Warbler, Yellow-breasted Chat, Clay-colored Sparrow, Lark Sparrow, Grasshopper Sparrow, Henslow's Sparrow, Lincoln's Sparrow, and Rose-breasted Grosbeak.

The question remains, was the spring of 2012 simply aberrant in weather and bird movements, or was it an extraordinary look into the new "normal" of a climate-changed world?

SPECIES DATA

All CAPS = Casual or Accidental species

* = documented

Greater White-fronted Goose: The early peak was 12,000 on 1 Mar at Rapp P Page and 20,000 on 4 Mar at Riverton WA Fremont (both KDy). To the east, 6000 in Iowa on 3 Mar (SJD) and 250 at Princeton WA Scott 11 Mar (WMZ) would have been astounding a decade ago. Flocks reached north Iowa soon after, with 1000 present at Cardinal M Winneshiek 13 Mar (RWZ) and 1882 at USNWR Kossuth 14 Mar (TSk). White-fronted flocks lingered into May, including 46 on 4 May at USNWR (TSk) and

100 on 10 May at Cardinal M (DC). Last: 6 on 12 May in Boone (WO), 4 on 17 May Johnson (RJH), and 30 May at Ventura M Cerro Gordo (DS).

Snow Goose: Keith Dyche was inundated with white geese at the start of the period: 80,000 at Rapp P Page and 750,000 at Riverton WA Fremont. 10,000 were observed flying over Hillview P Plymouth 13 Mar (GLV). Snow Geese were found in good numbers eastward this spring, with peaks of 1000 on 10 Mar at Amana L Iowa (CRE) and 1500 on 17 Mar at Otter Creek M Tama (TSS). Centrally, 13,000 on 11 Mar at Red Rock Res Marion (JS) were probably not the

same 13,000 found at Kirchner Pr *Clay* 15 Mar (LAS). Few were reported in Apr, and the last were 5 at Eagle L *Hancock* 11 May (PH), 4 at Lacey-Keosauqua SP *Van Buren* (DCP), and 19 May in *Iowa* (CJB).

Ross's Goose: 10,000 were estimated in the white goose gathering at Rapp P *Page* 1 Mar (KDy). Far smaller numbers were found farther east, including 30 on 3 and 10 Mar in *Iowa* (SJD, CRE), and 34 on 10 Mar at Saylorville Res *Polk* (AB). One or two were reported from locations east to *Lee* (JLF) and until 18 May at Akron *Plymouth* (SJD).

Cackling Goose: Most: 362 on 2 Mar at Saylorville Res *Polk* (SJD). 32 on 16 Mar at Rush L *Palo Alto* (LAS) were the last flock reported, with lingering singles only noted 3 May at USNWR *Kossuth* (MCK) and 17 May in *Greene* (SJD).

Mute Swan: One or two adults were reported from *Iowa*, *Tama*, and *Johnson* from early Mar to early May (JF, CRE, MP, JLF).

Trumpeter Swan: Most: 32 on 3 Mar at Amana L *Iowa* (SJD), 18 on 6 Mar at Otter Creek M *Tama* (DGE), and 30 on 11 Apr at USNWR *Kossuth*, where 25 remained 10 May (TSk).

Tundra Swan: The only reports were 2 on 10 Mar at Amana L *Iowa* (CRE), 2 on 11 Mar at Otter Creek M *Tama* (TGS), and 5 on 11 Mar at Princeton WA *Scott* (WMZ).

Gadwall: Most: 8600 on 15 Mar at Trumbull L *Clay* (LAS), then 736 on 29 Mar at USNWR *Kossuth* (TSk) and 358 on 18 Apr at Saylorville Res *Polk* (SJD). A hybrid Gadwall X American Wigeon was noted at Anderson L *Hamilton* 20 Mar (SJD). Last, both 29 May: singles at Ada Hayden P *Story* (WO) and 24 at Forney L *Fremont* (KDy).

American Wigeon: Peaked at 173 on 4 Apr at USNWR *Kossuth* (TSk); otherwise, much smaller groups of up to 24 were noted to mid-Apr. The final stragglers were 27



Trumpeter Swan, Amana L, Iowa, 9 March 2012. Photograph by Jean Allgood, Iowa City, IA.



Leucistic female Wood Duck with ducklings, near Quimby, Cherokee, 17 May 2012. Photograph by Stephen J. Dinsmore, Ames, IA.

May at Dunbar Sl *Greene* (MP) and 28 May at Saylorville Res *Polk* (AB).

American Black Duck: There were eleven reports of 1 or 2 birds until 16 Mar from eight counties southeast from a *Fremont* to *Winneshiek* line (BSc, MP, SJD, KDy, CRE).

Mallard: Most: 35,000 at Riverton WA *Fremont* (KDy) and 15,000 at Saylorville Res *Polk* (BE), both 4 Mar. A hybrid Mal-



Blue-winged X Cinnamon Teal hybrid, Ames, Story, 17 April 2012. Photograph by Stephen J. Dinsmore, Ames, IA.

lard X Northern Pintail was noted 3 Mar in Iowa (SJD).

MOTTLED DUCK: Two reports were received: a pair 28-29 Mar at Forney L *Fremont* (*WRS, *LJP), and 14 Apr at New L *Woodbury* (*BFH).

Blue-winged Teal: Most: 662 on 4 Apr at USNWR *Kossuth* (TSk) and 750 on 18 Apr at Saylorville Res *Polk* (SJD).

Cinnamon Teal: All: 10 and 23 Mar at New L *Woodbury* (GLV, BFH), 15 and 16 Mar at Princeton M *Scott* (JF, CRE), 28 Mar-30 Apr at Forney L *Fremont* (KDy, POR, DTh, JG, JLF), 13 and 14 Apr at Diehl Wetlands *Warren* (JS, RIA), 14 Apr at Bay's Branch *Guthrie* (SJD), and a male hybrid with a Blue-winged Teal 17-24 Apr at Ames *Story* (SJD).

Northern Shoveler: The highest counts were 1879 counted on the USNWR *Kossuth* waterfowl survey 29 Mar (TSk) and 750 on 16 Apr at L *Manawa Pottawattamie* (BG).

Northern Pintail: High counts came from the first week of Mar: 3500 at Say-

lorville Res *Polk* (BE) and 12,000 at River-ton WA *Fremont* (KDy). A lone drake 21 May at Crystal Hills WA *Hancock* (PH) was a month later than other reported observa-tions.

Green-winged Teal: The migration period was bracketed by 625 on 4 Mar at Saylorville Res *Polk* (BE) and 853 on 11 Apr at USNWR *Kossuth* (TSk). Most: 1868 on 29 Mar at USNWR (TSk). One 30 May at Harmon L *Winnebago* (DS) was the last of few May reports.

Canvasback: Low peak numbers of Canvasbacks this season included 30 on 3 Mar at Polk City WA *Polk* (JB) and 50 on 6 Mar at Otter Creek M *Tama* (DGE). Only 25, 6 and 17 were counted 29 Mar, 4 and 11 Apr during weekly USNWR *Kossuth* wa-terfowl counts (TSk).

Redhead: Most: 75 on 11 Mar at Princeton M *Scott* (WMZ). Stragglers remained at Forney L *Fremont* 29 May (DTh, KDy) and Hawkeye WA *Johnson* 30 May (JLF).

Ring-necked Duck: Peak reports were from central Iowa: 1030 on 11 Mar at Polk City WA *Polk* (BE) and 1200 on 12 Mar at Saylorville Res *Polk* (AB). Late birds were at Ada Hayden P *Story* 26 May (WO) and Forney L *Fremont* 29 May (DTh, KDy).

Greater Scaup: Up to 11 were reported at Saylorville Res *Polk* 2-25 Mar (SJD, JG, AB, JB). Up to 5 were reported in Mar without details from *Tama*, *Worth*, *Bremer*, *Dubuque*, *Linn*, and *Winnebago*.

Lesser Scaup: High counts were from Saylorville Res *Polk* in Mar: 6000 on 11 Mar (BE) and 2800 on 28 Mar (AB), while the most reported elsewhere were 800 on 17 Mar at Rice L *Worth* (PH). The last USNWR *Kossuth* count to include Lesser Scaup was 10 May, 6 were at Coralville Res *Johnson* 14 May (CJB), and the final lingerers were 26 May at Ada Hayden P *Story* (WO) and 3 on 29 May at Forney L *Fremont* (KDy).

Surf Scoter: All: 18 Apr at Saylorville Res *Polk* (DTh, JG, SJD) and 21 Apr at Red Rock Res *Marion* (JG).

Long-tailed Duck: A female was at Pool 19 *Lee* 11 Mar (TMH).

Bufflehead: Most: 62 on 20 Mar at Saylorville Res *Polk* (JG). Last: 5 on 23 Apr at George Wyth SP *Black Hawk* (DGE).

Common Goldeneye: Most: 38 on 3 Mar at George Wyth SP *Black Hawk* (DGE) and 40 on 4 Mar at New L *Woodbury* (BFH). One 10 Apr at Prairie Lakes P *Black Hawk* (DGE) was the only Apr report, and the last was a female at Dunbar Sl *Greene* 2-12 May (SJD, WO).

Common Merganser: Peaked the first week of Mar with 2250 counted at Saylorville Res *Polk* (BE), and then numbers dropped sharply thereafter: 124 on 15 Mar at Elk Lake WPA *Clay* (LAS), followed by 20 on 20 Mar at New L *Woodbury* (TLu). Last were singles 30 Apr-7 May at Diamond L *Poweshiek* (MP, SJD) and 15 May at Saylorville Res *Polk* (SJD).

Red-breasted Merganser: Most: 118-220 on 21-22 Mar at Saylorville Res *Polk* (JG, AB, POR, SJD). Single females could still be found 21 May at Crystal L *Hancock* (PH) and 22 May at Ada Hayden P *Story* (WO).

Ruddy Duck: Peak reports of 220-463 came from Saylorville Res *Polk* 17-22 Mar (AB, JG, SJD). Last: 10 on 10 May at US-NWR *Kossuth* (TSk) and a single 30 May at Silver L *Worth* (DS).

Northern Bobwhite: A single Bobwhite 18 Apr *Marshall* (MP) was the northernmost.

Gray Partridge: Found south to Boone (WO) and *Story* (HZ) in the central part of the state.

Ruffed Grouse: The only report was of negative data: three visits to Stephens SF *Lucas* produced no birds (JS).

Greater Prairie Chicken: The peak report of only 4 at the Kellerton *Ringgold* lek was noted 31 Mar (DTh).

Common Loon: First: 20 Mar at Saylorville Res *Polk* (JG). Up to 6 were seen in ten other counties until 25 May at Ada Hayden P *Story* (WO). A flyover spotted at Neal Smith NWR *Jasper* on 3 Apr was an unexpected first at the refuge (KVS).

Pied-billed Grebe: The first arrived at the start of the period at Cedar L *Linn*, where they formerly wintered until the 2008 flood (BSc). Peak reports came from 15 Apr with 87 at Ada Hayden P *Story* (WO) and 400 at Swan L SP *Carroll* (SB).

Horned Grebe: First were singles 6 Mar at Ft Madison *Lee* (CF) and 8 Mar at Cedar L *Linn* (JF). Single digit totals were reported from ten additional counties until 12 May at Ada Hayden P *Story* (WO).

Red-necked Grebe: Possibly the same bird was seen 28 Apr at Saylorville Res *Polk* (SJD, JG, AB, POR, JB) and 30 Apr at Ada Hayden P *Story* (SJD, JJD, WO). Another was viewed on the Mississippi R *Dubuque* 15 May (DS).

Eared Grebe: They were first spotted at Saylorville Res *Polk* 20 Mar (RIA). April high counts ranged across the state from 17 at Pinchey Bottoms *Marion* (JS), to 10 at Cedar L *Linn* (JF), to 7 at L Manawa *Pottawattamie* (JLF). Last: 2 on 31 May in *Cedar* (WMZ).

Western Grebe: All: Singles noted 18 Apr, and 10 and 18 May, at Saylorville Res *Polk* (DTh, SJD, JB), 2 on 22 Apr at L Manawa *Pottawattamie* (JJD), and 3 on 29 Apr at the Cherokee sewage lagoon *Cherokee* were a county first (DB).

NEOTROPIC CORMORANT: Multiple cormorants were documented 1 Apr at Forney L *Fremont* (*KDY), and singles were reported from this location throughout the month (DTh, JLF). Single subadults were



Great Blue Heron, near Ida Grove, Ida, 5 May 2012. Photograph by Don Poggensee, Ida Grove, IA.

noted at Saylorville Res Polk 26 Apr (*SJD) and 25 May (*AB).

Double-crested Cormorant: First: a single flyover 16 Mar at Ada Hayden P Story (TMH) and 3 on 17 Mar at L Rathbun Appanoose (RLC). The big push into central Iowa was signaled by 200 on 23 Mar at Hallett's Quarry Polk (JG).

American White Pelican: Most: 600 on 17 Apr at New L Monona (GLV) and 450 on 7 May at Red Rock Res Marion (SJD).

American Bittern: First: 15 Apr in *Black Hawk* (TGS) and 18 Apr at Riverton WA *Fremont* (KDy). Singles were noted in seven additional counties, and a peak of 6 on 29 May at Forney L *Fremont* (KDy) suggests nesting at that location.

Least Bittern: All: 2 May in *Black Hawk* (TGS), 3 on 16 May at Big Wall L *Wright* (CJL), 21 May at Prairie L *Dickinson* (MHB), 25 May at Nellen M *Mills* (KDy), and 28 May at Ada Hayden P *Story* (WO).

Great Egret: One was second earliest on record 8 Mar at Riverton WA *Fremont* (KDy- photo). Eighteen remaining at Forney L *Fremont* 29 May (KDy) suggests nest-

ing, as does 49 on 30 Apr at Green Isl WA *Jackson* (CRE).

Snowy Egret: One or two were found scattered around the southwest from 17 Apr to 30 May in *Fremont*, *Page*, *Crawford*, *Mills*, and *Woodbury* (DTh, KDy, BE, GLV, POR). Also seen *Polk*, *Des Moines*, *Lee*, and *Johnson* (TL, AB, CF, JWR, JF).

Little Blue Heron: Seen at two locations: 3 at Saylorville Res *Polk* 6 May (SJD) and singles on 5, 6, and 25 May at Forney L *Fremont* (KDy, KVS).

Cattle Egret: From 1 to 7 were noted 17 Apr to 29 May in *Johnson*, *Hancock*, *Polk*, *Page*, *Hamilton*, *Fremont*, *Woodbury* (JLF, RGo, JB, KDy, SJD, KVS, GLV, DTh).

Black-crowned Night-Heron: First: 3 on 30 Mar at Ada Hayden P *Story* (WO). The high count of 10 on 29 May came from the center of the wading-bird universe at Forney L *Fremont* (KDy); otherwise up to 6 were seen in seven additional counties.

Yellow-crowned Night-Heron: All: 9 Apr at Forney L *Fremont* (KDy), 30 Apr at Riverton WA *Fremont* (JLF), 2 on 12 May at George Wyth SP *Black Hawk* (TGS), and 28 May at Iowa Arboretum *Boone* (BR).

GLOSSY IBIS: All: 10 and 12 Apr at Nellen M *Mills* (*KDy, *PHA, RIA- photo) and 8 May at Crane Cr *Black Hawk* (*TGS).

White-faced Ibis: The first were 6 with the Glossy Ibis on 10 Apr at Nellen M *Mills* (KDy), and up to 19 were at that location through at least 25 May (KDy). Away from the sw corner: 7 on 15 Apr at Tomahawk M *Sac* (PE), 21-22 Apr and 4 May at Errington M *Polk* (AB, BE, JG), 2 on 23

Apr in Woodbury (GLV), 2 on 1 May in Dickinson (ETH), and 10 May at Port Louisa NWR Louisa (MSIM).

Turkey Vulture: First seen 6 Mar over Des Moines Polk (JB) and Cedar Rapids Linn (BSc), they worked their way into north Iowa 17 Mar over Worth (PH) and 18 Mar over Mason City Cerro Gordo (RGo).

Osprey: First: 13 Mar at L Macbride Johnson (JF) and 21 Mar at Hallett's Quarry Polk (JG).

Mississippi Kite: Only the expected Ottumwa Wapello and Des Moines Polk observations were reported.

Bald Eagle: High count: 295 at Saylorville Res Polk on 2 Mar (SJD).

Northern Harrier: High count: 4 on 11 Mar at Red Rock Res Marion (JS). A few migrants were still moving in early May, like 5 May near Gilbertville Black Hawk (DGE), but 1 on 28 May at Blue Wing M Palo Alto (BT) suggests nesting.

Sharp-shinned Hawk: Last: 17 May at Deere Dike Dubuque (DS)

Cooper's Hawk: Reported nesting in Kossuth, Warren, Guthrie, Woodbury, and Polk (MCK, JS, SJD, GLV), but certainly far more widespread.

Northern Goshawk: Only reported 26 Mar at Donnellson Unit Lee (JWR, JLF).

Red-shouldered Hawk: I received the usual reports from se of a Decatur to Bremer line.

Broad-winged Hawk: First: 2 on 9 Apr at Stephens SF Lucas (RIA). The largest kettles involved 100 on 2 May in Black Hawk (TGS) and 44 on 22 Apr at Algona



Red-shouldered Hawk nestlings, Shimek SF, Lee, 24 May 2012. Photograph by Paul O. Roisen, Sioux City, IA.

Kossuth (MCK). Nesting birds were noted from Polk, Washington, and Iowa (AB, CJC).

Swainson's Hawk: First: 3 on 9 Apr in Pottawattamie (JT). Singles were spotted in Polk, Guthrie, Woodbury, Story, and Harrison until 6 May (SJD, GLV, SSP, KVS, POR, JT). A group of 7 was observed 1 May at Nellen M Mills (KDy).

Rough-legged Hawk: Seven were along the same road 10 Mar in Clarke (JG), but there were no reports at all after mid-Mar.

Golden Eagle: An adult and an imm attended the 3 Mar eagle watch at Prairie Heritage Center O'Brien (LAS), then singles were noted in Polk, Winneshiek, Johnson, Black Hawk, and Des Moines 10-17 Mar (DTh, BE, RWZ, JF, RGo, CF).

Merlin: The first was 21 Mar at Burlington Des Moines (JWR), while the last was 3 May at George Wyth SP Black Hawk (TGS).

Peregrine Falcon: The season began with 2 on 3 Mar over Aaron Brees' yard Polk. Additional migrants were seen throughout the season until 17 May in Sac (PE).

Sora: One on 28 Mar at Water Works P Johnson (JH) was record early, and another 30 Mar at Wickiup Hill Linn (BSc) was second earliest. The next weren't found until mid-Apr.

Common Gallinule: First: 30 Apr at Riverton WA Fremont (JLF), and then 29 May at Forney L Fremont (KDy, POR) and 3 on 30 May at Nellen M Mills (KDy).

American Coot: Steve Dinsmore counted 1800 on 20 Apr at Otter Creek M Tama. Peak counts of 1000–2000 were posted to eBird from Allamakee, Bremer, Fremont, Jackson, and Pottawattamie.

Sandhill Crane: High counts included 39 on 14 Apr at Sweet M Bremer (DGE), 16 on 30 Apr at Greene Isl WA Jackson (CRE), and 27 on 23 May at Otter Creek M Tama (POR). The western edge of nesting reports ran from Thorpe P Winnebago (LSR) to Anderson L Hamilton (SJD). At Chichaqua WA Polk, wetlands where nesting occurred last year were dry this spring (AB).

Black-bellied Plover: One arrived early on 26 Apr at Tannery Ponds Woodbury (POR), the rest of migration showed up mid-May. Peak counts at Saylorville Res Polk and Hawkeye WA Johnson quickly reached 20–30 birds (DTh, SJD, JF). From 1 to 8 were seen at other scattered locations throughout the period.

American Golden Plover: First: 3 on 14 Mar at Hawkeye WA Johnson (JF) [ties second earliest]. Huge numbers staged around Dunbar Sl Greene: 258–381 from 1 to 14 Apr (SJD) and 1289 on 24 Apr (RIA). Elsewhere, 10–36 were found in May in Black Hawk, Boone, Hardin, Kossuth, Story, and Wright (TGS, DGE, DCH, MP, MCK, CJL). Last were 2 on 21 May at Ventura M

Cerro Gordo (PH) and a single at Hawkeye WA 31 May (JF).

Semipalmated Plover: First: 2 on 12 Apr at Saylorville Res Polk (SJD). Small numbers occurred across the state until a mid-May peak: 150 at Hawkeye WA Johnson (JF), 71 at Dunbar Sl Greene (SJD), and 91 at Saylorville Res (SJD). Numbers dropped sharply thereafter, except for a late surge of 120 on 30 May at Ventura M Cerro Gordo (PH).

Piping Plover: First: 12 Apr at both MidAmerican Ponds Pottawattamie (RIA) and Saylorville Res Polk (SJD). Up to 4 were seen throughout the period at MidAmerican, and a late migrant was at Saylorville Res Polk 28 May (JG).

Killdeer: 319 on 3 Mar at Hawkeye WA Johnson (SJD) was an extremely large gathering for so early in the season. At a more expected time, 300 were at Ventura M Cerro Gordo 14 May (PH).

Black-necked Stilt: Two were at Hawkeye WA Johnson 29 Apr (JH), and one lingered 1 May (JF). On the other side of the state, one was at Riverton WA Fremont 5 May (POR, KDy), while 3 were found at Forney L Fremont the next day (KVS). Last: 3 on 18 May at Port Louisa NWR Louisa (MSIM- photo) and 2 on 20 May at Otter Creek M Tama (MP).

American Avocet: First: 8 on 12 Apr at MidAmerican Ponds Pottawattamie (RIA). Widely reported, the highest counts of 10 to 25 were found in Johnson, Ida, Cerro Gordo, Page, and Buena Vista until 12 May (JLF, JF, DPO, RGO, CJF, JJD, KDy, GLV, TJ). Last: 25 May at Hawkeye WA Johnson (MHB) and 8 still at MidAmerican Ponds 29 May (DTh).

Spotted Sandpiper: One on 5 Apr at MidAmerican Ponds Pottawattamie was second earliest ever (RIA), and the next was 14 Apr at Saylorville Res Polk (JB).

Solitary Sandpiper: The first was

quite early on 8 Apr at Diehl Wetlands *Warren* (JS). Last: 17 May at both Ada Hayden P *Story* (WO) and Deere Dike *Dubuque* (DS).

Greater Yellowlegs: First: 2 Mar at Saylorville Res *Polk* (SJD- details)[record early]. An early peak came in the north at Virgin L *Palo Alto* with 47 on 24 Mar (LAS). Later, high counts were 68 on 7 Apr at Dunbar Sl *Greene* (SJD), 50 on 25 Apr at Sedan Bottoms *Appanoose* (TJ), and 40 on 25 Apr at Poole Sl *Allamakee* (DC). Last: 26 May at Deere Dike *Dubuque* (CRE).

Willet: First: 22 on 14 Apr at Bartlett L *Fremont* (JG, KDy). A similar flock was also seen 28 Apr at Saylorville Res *Polk* (JB, AB, JG, SJD). Other shorebird locations held smaller groups, including 15 on 25 Apr at Swan L SP *Carroll* (MTW), 12 on 30 Apr in *Black Hawk* (DGE), 12 on 2 May at *Hawkeye WA Johnson* (JF) and 10 on 5 May at Ventura M *Cerro Gordo* (RGo). Last: 25 May at *Hawkeye WA* (KVS, JF).

Lesser Yellowlegs. First: 13 Mar at Sandhill L *Woodbury* (TLu) and 15 Mar at Diehl Wetlands *Warren* (JS). Most: 500 on 25 Apr at Dean *Appanoose* (RLC, TJ) and 240 on 29 Apr at Dunbar Sl *Greene* (SJD). Last: 30 May at Ada Hayden P *Story* (WO) and 180 on 30 May at Ventura M *Cerro Gordo* (PH).

Upland Sandpiper: One at the Kellerton *Ringgold* prairie chicken lek 31 Mar was the second earliest on record (DTh). They were reported from eleven additional counties.

WHIMBREL: One was at Saylorville Res *Polk* 14 May (SJD- details).

Hudsonian Godwit: First: 1 Apr at Dunbar Sl *Greene* (SJD)[second earliest]. Other than 14 on 16 May at Blackhawk L *Sac* (PE) and 18 on 17 May at Dunbar Sl (SJD), groups of 7 or less were spread east to Green Bay Bottoms *Lee* 25 May (JWR). Last: 3 on 31 May at *Hawkeye WA Johnson* (JF).



Least Sandpiper, Woodbury, 12 May 2012.
Photograph by Paul O. Roisen, Sioux City, IA.

Marbled Godwit: Up to 9 were reported 14 Apr until 21 May from eleven counties without any identification details (m.ob.).

Ruddy Turnstone: The first of a remarkable movement of turnstones were 2 on 30 Apr in *Story* (Michael Meetz)[third earliest]. From 11 May until 27 May, up to 7 were seen at eight shorebird hotspots from *Dubuque* (DS) to *Carroll* (RES). On 28 May, 10 were at *Hawkeye WA Johnson* (JF, DP) and 15 were found at Virgin L *Palo Alto* (LAS). The last were 4 at Ventura M *Cerro Gordo* 30 May (PH).

Sanderling: First: 2 on 12 May at Little Storm L *Buena Vista* (TJ). Then 3 were seen at Ada Hayden P *Story* 15 May (WO), 3 were at Tannery Ponds *Woodbury* 26 May (POR), 2 on 28 May at Virgin L *Palo Alto* (LAS), and 2-6 were noted at Saylorville Res *Polk* through 28 May (AB, RLC, JG).

Semipalmated Sandpiper: First: 14 Apr at Dunbar Sl *Greene* (SJD) and 15 Apr at George Wyth SP *Black Hawk* (DGE).

Numbers exploded the second half of May: 800 at Ventura M *Cerro Gordo* 14 May (PH), 278 on 14 May at Dunbar Sl (SJD), 250 on 19 May at Saylorville Res *Polk* (AB), and 1080 at Ventura M 30 May (PH).

Least Sandpiper: First: 2 on 17 Mar at Otter Creek M *Tama* (TS) and 19 Mar at Owego Wetlands *Woodbury* (POR). 150–200 were noted at Hawkeye WA *Johnson* (CJC), Dunbar Sl *Greene* (SJD), and Saylorville Res *Polk* (RLC) in May, but Ventura M *Cerro Gordo* attracted the most: 1100 on 14 May and an estimated 3700 on 30 May (PH).

White-rumped Sandpiper: First: 2 along Hwy 2 in *Taylor* 30 Apr (JLF). Most: 120 on 19 May at Saylorville Res *Polk* (AB) and 180 on 30 May at Ventura M *Cerro Gordo* (PH).

Baird's Sandpiper: First: 3 on 21 Apr at Saylorville Res *Polk* (JB) and a single 24 Apr *Dallas* (RIA). They peaked at Dunbar Sl *Greene* with 91 on 29 Apr (SJD), and the last 20 were found 14 May at Ventura M *Cerro Gordo* (PH).

Pectoral Sandpiper: First: 9 Mar at Cone M *Louisa* (DP) and 11 Mar at Princeton M *Scott* (WMZ). High counts include 400 on 12 Apr at *Coralville Res Johnson* (CJB), 530 on 21 Apr at Saylorville Res *Polk* (AB), 1000 on 25 Apr at *Dean Appanoose* (RLC), and a whopping 2172 on 29 Apr at Dunbar Sl *Greene* (SJD). A sizeable gathering of 600 could still be found 30 May at Ventura M *Cerro Gordo* (PH), and a lone straggler was in *Cedar* 31 May (WMZ).

Dunlin: The earliest arrivals were 19 on 7 Apr at Dunbar Sl *Greene* (SJD) and 5 on 8 Apr at Saylorville Res *Polk* (AB). Peak movement may have occurred 12 May, with 52 in one flock at *Red Rock Res Marion* (JG) and 200 at Hawkeye WA *Johnson* (CJC). From 18 to 42 were found over the next week in *Cerro Gordo*, *Story*, *Buena Vista*, and

Hancock (PH, MP, PE, CJF). Last: 36 on 21 May at *Crystal Hills WA Hancock* (PH) and 24 on 25 May still at *Hawkeye WA* (MHB).

CURLEW SANDPIPER: An individual of this accidental species was discovered by James Forde 24 May at *Hawkeye WA Johnson*, and it remained until the next day (*JF, *CRE, *MHB).

Stilt Sandpiper: Not a big year for this shorebird, the first were noted 20 Apr at *Ft. Madison Lee* (CF) and 21 Apr at Saylorville Res *Polk* (AB). Only 1 to 5 were reported from seven additional locations, and one larger group of about 35 was seen 20 May at Saylorville Res (AB, RLC).

Short-billed Dowitcher: The first Short-bills reported during an eight-day span of overlapping dowitcher species were 7 on 28 Apr at both *Hendrickson M Story* (MP) and *Rapp P Page* (KDy). High counts included 25 on 12 May at *Hawkeye WA Johnson* (CJC), 30 on 14 May at *Ventura M Cerro Gordo* (PH), and 24 on 14 May at *Dunbar Sl Greene* (SJD). Last, both 25 May: 4 at *Hawkeye WA* (MHB) and a loner at *Green Bay Bottoms Lee* (JWR).

Long-billed Dowitcher: The first two were early on 23 Mar at *Diamond L Poweshiek* (MP)[second earliest], and the next were 2 on 1 Apr at *Dunbar Sl Greene* (SJD). 44–72 were noted 25 Apr–1 May at *Dean Appanoose* (RLC, TJ), *Rapp P Page* (KDy), *Virgin L Palo Alto* (LAS), and *Diehl Wetland Warren* (JS), with a peak of 115 on 29 Apr at *Dunbar Sl* (SJD). Last: 12 on 5 May at Saylorville Res *Polk* (AB).

Wilson's Snipe: The first were 10 on 9 Mar at *Cone M Louisa* (DP).

American Woodcock: Woodcock were seen at the start of the period: at *Squaw Creek P Linn* (BSc) and 5 near *Fairfield Jefferson* (DCP). Larry Reis flushed one on 4 eggs 5 Apr at *L Meyer Winneshiek*, and Erich Gilbert watched one lead 2 small chicks



California Gull, Hawkeye WA, Johnson, 31 May 2012. Photograph by Jim Forde, Cedar Rapids, IA.

across a road at Algona Kossuth 22 Apr. Six were still displaying 22 May at Cedar Hills Sand Prairie Black Hawk (POR).

Wilson's Phalarope: First: 8 Apr at Pinchey Bottoms Marion (JS) and 17 Apr at Colo Ponds Story (MP). Most: 20 on 28 Apr at Nellen M Mills (KDy), 39 on 29 Apr at Dunbar Sl Greene (SJD), and 21 on 30 Apr at Forney L Fremont (JLF). Last: 2 on 27 May at Dunbar Sl (MP) and 2 on 28 May at Hawkeye WA Johnson (POR).

Red-necked Phalarope: All: 4 on 12 May at Tannery Ponds Woodbury (POR), 19 May at Saylorville Res Polk (AB), 25 and 26 May at Hawkeye WA Johnson (JF, MHB, KVS, JG), and 30 May at Swan L SP Carroll (MTW).

Bonaparte's Gull: The first report came from Saylorville Res Polk on 20 Mar (JG), and the peak of 134 was noted there 1 Apr (SJD). Last: 4 on 21 Apr at Forney L Fremont (JJD) and 7 May at Red Rock Res Marion (SJD).

Franklin's Gull: A single on 4 Mar at Saylorville Res Polk (BE) was a month earlier than the next reports. The season's

peak of 400 on 16 Apr at L Manawa Potawattamie was reported by a visiting birder (BG), and 233 were noted 5 May at Saylorville Res Polk (SJD). Six lingered below Saylorville dam 30 May (DTh).

Ring-billed Gull: Gulls peaked early at Saylorville Res Polk, with 8500 on 8 Mar (SJD).

CALIFORNIA GULL: Two were a surprising find at Hawkeye WA Johnson on the final day of the season 31 May (*JF).

Herring Gull: The peak count was 312 on 4 Mar at Saylorville Res Polk (BE). Last: 17 May at Little Storm L Buena Vista (SJD).

Thayer's Gull: Up to 3 juvs frequented L & Ds 14 and 15 Scott the first week of Mar (JF, DP), and one remained until 14 Mar (MR).

ICELAND GULL: Two Kumlien's Gulls were at L & D 14 Scott 4 Mar (*JF).

Lesser Black-backed Gull: One or two 1st and 2nd winter birds were seen with the Scott gull swarms until 14 Mar (JF, DP, MR). Another juv was seen 6 and 10 Mar at Ft Madison Lee (CF).

Glaucous Gull: A juv remained at L & D 14 Scott until 5 Mar (JF, DP).

Least Tern: At nesting locations, up to 8 were found at MidAmerican Ponds Potawattamie beginning 22 May (JLF, DTh, POR), and 2 were at Port Neal Woodbury 26 May (POR). A single migrant was at Saylorville Res Polk 28 May (JG, AB).

Caspian Tern: First: 18 Apr at Saylorville Res Polk (SJD)[third earliest], and 240 came in to roost at Saylorville Res on 9 May (DTh). In nc Iowa, 72 were at Ventura M Cerro Gordo 11 May (PH). The last was still at Ada Hayden P Story 31 May (WO).

Black Tern: First: 6 May at Forney L Fremont (KVS) and 7 May at Swan L SP Carroll (RIA). Most: 220 on 25 May at Forney L (KDy). Twenty exhibited nesting behavior at Myre Sl Winnebago 27 May (JB), but 32

on 30 May at Ventura M *Cerro Gordo* (DS) faced drying complications.

Common Tern: First noted at Saylorville Res *Polk* 6 May (AB), they peaked there 10 May with 22 (SJD). Singles were found 12 May at George Wyth SP *Black Hawk* (TGS) and 18 May at Hawarden Sioux (SJD). The last were 3 on 21 May at Crystal Hills WA *Hancock* (PH).

Forster's Tern: The first was found 7 Apr below Saylorville dam *Polk* (DTh)[ties third earliest], and 2 arrived at Rapp P *Page* 9 Apr (KDy). The largest flock was 16 on 2 May at Sweet M *Bremer* (TGS). The last was also below Saylorville dam 30 May (DTh).

White-winged Dove: They visited two locations in the west this spring: Keith Dyche's neighborhood *Shenandoah Page* held a pair after 15 Mar (KDy, JLF), and a single visited a home in Merrill *Plymouth* 21—23 Mar (TLu, GLV, POR).

Yellow-billed Cuckoo: First: 5 May at both River Valley Wetlands *Cedar* (CRE) and Summerset BP *Warren* (JS). Six on 28 May at Grammer Grove WA *Marshall* (MP) were the most.

Black-billed Cuckoo: The first was early on 3 May at George Wyth SP *Black*

Hawk (TGS). One at Little Sioux WA *Clay* 26 May was the first in nw Iowa in three years for Lee Schoenewe.

Barn Owl: A window-killed owl was found on a farm near Harmon L WMA *Winnebago* 9 May (LSR, SJD, CJF).

Snowy Owl: All: a juv female found 24 Jan near Elkhart *Polk* remained until at least 8 Mar (SJD, mob). Nearby, a juv male found 23 Feb was still being seen 3 Mar (SJD, mob). In *Page* a juv female found 24 Feb was last reported 3 Mar (KDy). One was found 1 Mar at Goose L WMA *Greene* (Tom Putnam, Tom Finley-photo), and the last was 1 at Owego Wetlands *Woodbury* 10 Mar (GLV, LH).

BURROWING OWL: One explored 240th St west of Webster City *Hamilton* 24-25 Mar (*JE, *POR).

Long-eared Owl: All: 2 on 2 Mar at *Polk City WA Polk* (POR), 4 on 8 Mar at Saylorville Res *Polk* (AB), 1 Apr at in *Black Hawk* (TGS), and an injured bird 2 Apr in *Marshall* that later died (Jacie Garden fide SJD).

Short-eared Owl: One or two were found until 2 Apr in *Iowa, Jasper, Polk, Woodbury, Ringgold, and Johnson* (SJD, KVS, DTh, LH, JS, JF, JWR).

Northern Saw-whet Owl: All: 10 Mar at Moorehead P *Ida* (LH) and 11 Mar at Red Rock Res *Marion* (JS).

Common Nighthawk: First: 3 May at both Iowa City *Johnson* (MHB) and Saylorville Res *Polk* (AB), and 4 May at Algona *Kossuth* (MCK).

Chuck-will's-widow: Reported from the usual two areas: Stephens SF *Lucas* (KDy, JLF) and in *Fremont* (KDy).

Eastern Whip-poor-will: One was recorded early in rural *Clarke* 5 Apr (SH).

Chimney Swift: First: 2 on 21 Apr at Saylorville Res *Polk* (AB). The largest groups reported were 50 on 28 Apr at Ames *Story*



Eastern Screech-Owl, North Liberty, Johnson, 15 May 2012. Photograph by Jim Scheib, Iowa City, IA.



Least Flycatcher, Anderson L, Hamilton, 8 May 2012. Photograph by Stephen J. Dinsmore, Ames, IA.



Western Kingbird, Palo Alto, 3 May 2012. Photograph by Tyler M. Harms, Ames, IA.

(MM) and 100 on 12 May at Algona Kossuth (MCK).

Ruby-throated Hummingbird: First: 25 Apr in *Clarke* (SH) and 30 Apr in *Polk* (AB).

Red-headed Woodpecker: A few were starting to move in Mar: 10 Mar at Pammel

SP *Madison* (JB), 2 on 19 Mar in *Crawford* (POR), and 2 on 26 Mar at *Donnellson Unit Lee* (JWR).

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: Late-season probable nesters were found 29 May at both *Pilot Knob SP Hancock* (DS) and *Little Sioux P Woodbury* (GLV).

Olive-sided Flycatcher: First noted 5 May at *Waubonsie SP Fremont* (KVS) and 9 May at *Croton Unit Lee* (JWR). Last: 25 May at *Ada Hayden P Story* (WO) and 29 May at *Pilot Knob SP Hancock* (DS).

Eastern Wood-Pewee: First: 4 May at *L Nodaway Adair* (KVS), and 5 May at both *Walnut Woods SP Polk* (JB) and *Parker's Woods Cerro Gordo* (RGo).

Yellow-bellied Flycatcher: First: 17 May at both *Sunken Grove WA Pocahontas* (SJD) and *Neal Smith NWR Jasper* (KVS). The most were 4 at *Grammer Grove WA Marshall* 26 May (MP), and the last 2 were at *Algona Kossuth* 30 May (MCK).

Acadian Flycatcher: They first arrived in *Appanoose* at *Sharon Bluffs SP* 5 May (RLC) and then 9 May at *Backbone SP Delaware* (BSc, CRE). As an indication of abundance, a dozen were counted 19 May at *Brinton Timber Washington* (CJC). The farthest nw included 24 May at *Parker's Woods Cerro Gordo* (RGo) and 26 May at *Holst SF Boone* (JS).

Alder Flycatcher: First: 12 May at *Coralville Res Johnson* (CRE). Except for a couple of eBird entries from the extreme sw, all other reports were north of I80, with as many as 10 still found at *Smith WA Kossuth* 30 May (MCK).

Willow Flycatcher: The first were 7 May at *Neal Smith NWR Jasper* (KVS) and 10 May at *Dunbar Sl Greene* (SJD).

Least Flycatcher: Arrived with the early warbler influx 2 May at *River Valley P Story* (SSP), and 3 May at both *Squaw Creek P Linn* (BSc) and *George Wyth SP*



Ross's Goose, Lake MacBride SP, Johnson, 8 April 2012. Photograph by Mark Brown, Iowa City, IA.



Black-necked Stilt, Riverton WA, Fremont, 5 May 2012. Photograph by Paul O. Roisen, Sioux City, IA.



Baltimore Oriole, Iowa City, Johnson, 21 May 2012. Photograph by Jim Scheib, Iowa City, IA.



Great Horned Owl on nest, Lone Tree, Johnson, 15 March 2012. Photograph by Jean Allgood, Iowa City, IA.



Eastern Kingbird on nest, Homestead, Iowa, 26 May 2012. Photograph by Jim Scheib, Iowa City, IA.

Black Hawk (DGE). Last: 2 on 28 May at Myre Sl Winnebago (BT) and through the end of the season at Algona Kossuth (MCK).

Eastern Phoebe: Like many species, widespread early: 10 and 11 Mar in Decatur, Polk, Des Moines, Lee, Jefferson, Tama, and Linn (JG, DTh, CF, DCP, BT).

Great Crested Flycatcher: First: 26 Apr at Waterworks P Polk (JB) and 28 Apr at Donnellson Unit Lee (RLC).

Western Kingbird: One was record early 14 Apr at L Manawa Pottawattamie (JG), followed by 30 Apr in Fremont (JLF). Also noted from the usual Page, Woodbury, and Des Moines Polk areas (KDy, SJD, JB).

Eastern Kingbird: First: 25 Apr in Appanoose (RLC, TJ) and 27 Apr at Riverton WA Fremont (KDy).

Scissor-tailed Flycatcher: Reports for this species seem to be increasing: 16-17 Apr in Johnson (JF, CRE), 26 Apr ne of US-NWR Kossuth (TSk, EG), and a third photographed 20 May in Hancock (BaE).

Loggerhead Shrike: Singles of this declining species were reported from only Warren, Louisa, Hamilton, Bremer, Iowa, and Winnebago (JS, DP, JB, TGS, eBird).

Northern Shrike: Singles were noted in Plymouth, Appanoose, Dallas, Polk, Louisa, Winneshiek, Story (TLu, TJ, JB, SJD, DP, LR, WO); and the last was 21 Mar at Saylorville Res Polk (AB).

White-eyed Vireo: First: 21 Apr at Hickory Hill P Johnson (CBr) and 22 Apr at Starr's Cave Des Moines (CF). They were reported se of a Warren (JS) to Black Hawk (TGS) line, and in the sw corner in Page and Fremont (KDy, JLF, KVS).

Bell's Vireo: The first were 7 on 5 May in Fremont (KVS) and a pair on 6 May at Squaw Creek P Linn (BSc). One on 14 May at Morse L WPA Wright (RGo) was the farthest north in the state.

Yellow-throated Vireo: Early arrivals were 22 Apr at Donnellson Unit Lee (JWR) and 25 Apr at Gibson RA Henry (CRE).

Blue-headed Vireo: Few were entered into the IOU or eBird databases this year. The first were 26 Apr at Tannery Ponds Woodbury (POR) and 28 Apr at Porter's L Page (KDy). The last were 13 May at both Jester P Polk (RLC) and Grammer Grove WA Marshall (MP), and 18 May at White Pine Hollow Dubuque (DS).

Warbling Vireo: One tied for second earliest ever 19 Apr at Waterworks P Polk (JB), followed by 22 Apr at River Valley Wetland Cedar (CRE) and 23 Apr along Belfast Rd Lee (JWR). Heaviest movement was noted 12 May with 10 at L Wapello SP Davis (RLC) and 25 at Hawkeye WA Johnson (CJC).

Philadelphia Vireo: First: 8 May at Little Wall L Hamilton (SJD) and 10 May at Saylorville Res Polk (SJD). Only a handful of others were noted, all from central Iowa, with the final migrants 14 May at Waterworks P Polk (JB) and 16 May at Grammer Grove WA Marshall (MP).

Red-eyed Vireo: The first was 25 Apr at Gibson RA Henry (CRE)[ties third

earliest], followed by 28 Apr at Grammer Grove WA Marshall (MP) and 29 Apr in Scott (POR). High counts for the season of 15 and 20 occurred 19 May in Washington (CJC) and Iowa (CJB).

Blue Jay: Migratory movement was



Carolina Wren, Wapello, 21 March 2012.
Photograph by Paul O. Roisen, Sioux City, IA.



Sedge Wren, Spring Run WA, Dickinson, 20 May 2012. Photograph by Mark Brown, Iowa City, IA.

noted 25 Apr with 149 in flocks of ~25 passing over Algona Kossuth (MCK) and 100 at Wild Finch Farm Johnson (CJB).

BLACK-BILLED MAGPIE: All reports were from the nesting area of Broken Kettle Grasslands Plymouth (TLu, GLV).

Purple Martin: Mid-March reports lacked details, then scouts arrived 30 Mar at Grimes Polk (JB) and 1 Apr at Little Wall L Hamilton (TMH). The highest count was 100 on 20 May at L Macbride Johnson (CJB).

Tree Swallow: First: 11 Mar at Otter Creek M Tama (TGS)[ties second earliest], 5 on 12 Mar at Heron Bend Lee (CF), and 13 Mar at Hawkeye WA Johnson (CBr).

Northern Rough-winged Swallow: First: 11 Apr at Gray's L Polk (JB) and 18 Apr at Ada Hayden P Story (WO). Earlier reports lacked details.

Bank Swallow: The first arrivals were 28 Apr at both Ada Hayden P Story and Mt Sterling M Van Buren (WO, RLC), and 29 Apr at Saylorville Res Polk (JB).

Cliff Swallow: The species arrived early and in good numbers: first on 11 Apr at Gray's L Polk (JB), and 40 the next day at Saylorville Res Polk (SJD). The largest gathering noted was 250 on 14 May in Johnson (CJB).

Barn Swallow: First: 2 Apr at Ames Story (SJD).

Tufted Titmouse: eBird spots the nw point of titmouse range in Boone.

Red-breasted Nuthatch: All of a handful of sightings were of 1 or 2 in Mar, with the last on 13 Mar in Black Hawk (DGE).

Brown Creeper: Most sightings were from Mar, but 2 were singing 3 Apr at Plum Cr Dam Kossuth (MCK), and the last were 21 Apr at Viking L SP Montgomery (JJ) and 23 Apr at Call SP Kossuth (MCK).

Carolina Wren: Including eBird reports, observations of singles or pairs came from twelve counties in the southern half of the state.

BEWICK'S WREN: Still a stalwart at the junkyard near Argyle *Lee* (12 Apr CF), but unreported elsewhere.

House Wren: One was singing record early 26 Mar at Johnston *Polk* (DTh), while another singing 6 Apr at Sny Magill *Clayton* (TMH) was second earliest.

Winter Wren: Up to 4 were noted from six counties at the start of their migration in late Mar, none in Apr, and the last was 6 May at Ada Hayden *P Story* (WO). The lack of April records may have resulted from underreporting, but the advanced season likely hastened their departure.

Sedge Wren: First: 2 on 22 Apr at Errington *M Polk* (AB)[second earliest] and 24 Apr at Harrier *M Boone* (SJD).

Marsh Wren: As many as 4 were record early 9 Apr at Forney *L Fremont* (KDy).

Golden-crowned Kinglet: They were first reported 18 Mar at both Parker's Woods *Cerro Gordo* (RGo) and Wickiup Hill *Linn* (BSc), but, similar to Winter Wrens, unreported in Apr.

Ruby-crowned Kinglet: First: 20 Mar at George Wyth *SP Black Hawk* (TSS)[second earliest], followed by 27 Mar at Ada Hayden *P Story* (WO). Most: 70 on 19 Apr at Ames *Story* (SSP). Last: 9 May at Hickory Hill *P Johnson* (JP).

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher: One at Starr's Cave *Des Moines* 4 Apr was record early (JWR), and the next were 3 on 15 Apr at Walnut Woods *SP Polk* (JG).

Veery: First: 6 May at Sockum Ridge *P Washington* (CRE). While one 24 May at Algona *Kossuth* was a late migrant (MCK), 8 singing 26 May at Holst *SF* along the Des Moines *R Boone* (JS) included possible nesters.

Gray-cheeked Thrush: First: 28 Apr at Burlington *Des Moines* (JWR), 2 May at River Valley *P Story* (SSP), and then an estimated 100 calls were heard at Algona *Kos-*

suth during a huge flight the night of 2 May (MCK). The peak number found on the ground was 12 on 7 May at Swan *L SP Carroll* (RIA). After mid-May, all sightings were from nc Iowa, with the final bird singing 29 May at Mason City *Cerro Gordo* (PH).

Swainson's Thrush: The first reports were 23 Apr at Jester *P Polk* (RIA) and 26 Apr at Waterworks *P Polk* (JB). Ahead of schedule, nocturnal flight calls were heard at the rate of over 15 a minute at Algona *Kossuth* the night of 2 May (MCK). The peak visual count came 7 May, when 40 were noted at Swan *L SP Carroll* (RIA). The last was 30 May at Smith *WA Kossuth* (MCK).

Hermit Thrush: First: 17 Mar at Belva-Deer *RA Keokuk* (BSc) and 21 Mar in Poweshiek (RVE). There weren't any major fallouts reported this spring, with the high count of 5 on 31 Mar at L Ahquabi *SP Warren* (JS) and 21 Apr at Hartman Reserve *Black Hawk* (DGE).

Wood Thrush: First: 2 on 2 May at Grammer Grove *WA Marshall* (MP).

Gray Catbird: One 12 Apr at Polk City *WA Polk* was the second earliest arrival ever (SJD). Other early birds were 21 Apr



Gray-cheeked Thrush, Carroll, 8 May 2012.
Photograph by Paul O. Roisen, Sioux City, IA.

at Coralville *Johnson* (RT) and 25 Apr at Mt Sterling M *Van Buren* (CRE). On 12 May, Chris Caster found 75 catbirds at Hawkeye WA *Johnson*.

Northern Mockingbird: Found in ten counties scattered across the southern half of the state beginning 22 Mar in *Madison* (POR). Additionally, they strayed north to Decorah *Winneshiek* 16 Apr (HH) and O'Brien 2 May (BM).

Brown Thrasher: First: 18 Mar near *Fairfield Jefferson* (DCP) and 23 Mar in *Johnson* (CJB).

American Pipit: Began moving early in the season, with 28 seen on 8 Mar at Rapp P *Page* (KDy) and a single 11 Mar at Otter Creek M *Tama* (TGS). The most were found 21 Apr: 24 at Pinchey Bottoms *Mari-on* (JG), and 100 in *Story* (SJD). None were found in May.

Cedar Waxwing: Large flocks were noted both early and late: 100 on 1 Mar at both Maffitt Res *Dallas* (DTh) and Big Creek SP *Polk* (JG), and 70 on 28 May at Call SP *Kossuth* (MCK).

Lapland Longspur: Only two reports from this mild spring: 100 on 3 Mar in *Bue-na Vista* (TJ) and 200 on 5 Apr at Bob Pyle M *Story* (SJD).

Smith's Longspur: First: 40 on 13 Mar in *Johnson* (JF), and 40 on 17 Mar at both Hawkeye WA *Johnson* (JF) and Chichaqua WA *Polk* (AB). Additional reports included 10 on 18 Mar and 18 on 29 Mar at Diehl Wetlands *Warren* (JS, JG), 300 at Jester P *Polk* 22 Mar (SJD), up to 100 at Neal Smith NWR *Jasper* until 4 Apr (KVS), and 6 at Bob Pyle M *Story* 8 Apr (SJD).

Ovenbird: First: 3 on 23 Apr at Donnellson Unit *Lee* (JWR).

Worm-eating Warbler: Only noted this spring on 2 and 9 May at Croton Unit *Lee* (CF, JWR), probably the same bird.

Louisiana Waterthrush: Found in-



Northern Waterthrush, Anderson L, Hamilton, 8 May 2012. Photograph by Stephen J. Dinsmore, Ames, IA.

credibly early in the se: 21 Mar at Starr's Cave *Des Moines* (JWR)[record early], 26 Mar at Lacey Keosauqua SP *Van Buren* (JWR, JLF)[second earliest], and 29 Mar at Ledges SP *Boone* (SJD)[third earliest]. Wandering migrants found Springbrook SP *Guthrie* 30 Apr (MTW) and Parker's Woods *Cerro Gordo* 3 May (RGo). Along the Des Moines R, 6 on 26 May at Holst SF *Boone* (JS) was a strong presence so far north.

Northern Waterthrush: First: 21 Apr in *Warren* (JS) and 22 Apr at River Valley Wetlands *Cedar* (CRE). A dozen were among the large fallout of migrants 2 May at River Valley P *Story* (SSP). Last: 26 May at Dean Appanoose (RLC) and 28 May at Ada Hayden P *Story* (WO).

Golden-winged Warbler: First: 2 May in *Marshall, Story, Johnson, Bremer, and Jasper* (MP, SSP, JP, TGS, KVS).

Blue-winged Warbler: First: 28 Apr at Donnellson Unit *Lee* (RLC) and 1 May at George Wyth SP *Black Hawk* (TGS). On 3 May, a migrant was at Parker's Woods *Cerro Gordo* (RGo) and a possible nester was at Squaw Creek P *Linn* (BSc). By 10 May, 10 were found at Yellow River SF *Allamakee* (MP).



Juvenile male, near Hudson, Black Hawk, 3 December 2011. Photograph by Bob Hewitt, Hudson, IA.



Juvenile male, s of Holstein, Ida, 12 December 2011. Photograph by Don Poggensee, Ida Grove, IA.



Juvenile female, Marion, 17 December 2011. Photograph by Stephen J. Dinsmore, Ames, IA.

Snowy Owls in Iowa, winter 2011–12



Juvenile female, Woodbury, 6 December 2011. Photograph by Paul O. Roisen, Sioux City, IA.



Juvenile female, Wright, 16 December 2011. Photograph by Roger Ewing, Clarion, IA.



*Juvenile male, Story, 19 December 2011.
Photograph by Carl Kurtz, St. Anthony, IA.*



*Juvenile male, Owego Wetland, Woodbury,
24 December 2011. Photograph by Don Pog-
gensee, Ida Grove, IA.*



*Adult female, n of Grundy Center, Grundy,
27 December 2011. Photograph by Larry A.
Stone, Elkader, IA.*



*Juvenile female, Woodbury, 17 January 2012.
Photograph by Paul O. Roisen, Sioux City, IA.*



*Juvenile female,
Guthrie, 28
December 2011.
Photograph by Lu-
cas Sisson, Charles
City, IA.*

Black-and-white Warbler: First: 11 Apr at Cedar Rapids *Linn* (BSc) and 15 Apr in *Johnson* (CJB). One at Springbrook SP *Carroll* 30 Apr (MTW) was the westernmost report. Last: 20 May at both Ada Hayden P *Story* (WO) and Wickiup Hill *Linn* (BT).

Prothonotary Warbler: As expected, found first in the south: 28 Apr in *Warren* (JS) and 29 Apr in *Des Moines* (CF). There were no reports west of a *Dallas* (JB, JG) to *Kossuth* (MCK) line.

Tennessee Warbler: This vocal species notably arrived, peaked, and left early this spring. First: 25 Apr at both Pioneer fields *Polk* (JG) and Belfast Rd *Lee* (CF). Birders commented on the din of Tennessees the first week of May, the peak count was 150 on 10 May at Ledges SP *Boone* (SJD), and there were almost none reported in the state after 16 May. The final two stragglers were at Grammer Grove WA *Marshall* 26 May (MP).

Orange-crowned Warbler: The Allens found one record early 3 Apr at Cottonwood RA *Polk* (RIA). No more than 3 were noted at scattered locations in Apr, and the last was 8 May at Bacon Creek P *Woodbury* (RR).

Nashville Warbler: FOY birds were first noted 26 Apr at Waterworks P *Polk* (JB) and 2 on 28 Apr at Donnellson Unit *Lee* (RLC). The last were 3 on 16 May at Hickory Hill P *Johnson* (JP).

Connecticut Warbler: Eleven birds were found 12-26 May in *Linn*, *Polk*, *Black Hawk*, *Johnson*, and *Iowa* (JF, KVS, TGS, CJB, SJD, CRE, DGE, BT).

Mourning Warbler: Notably early: 2 May at Walnut Woods SP *Polk* (RIA) [ties record early], 5 May at both George Wyth SP *Black Hawk* (TGS) and *Warren* (JS), 6 May at Sockum Ridge P *Washington* (CRE), and 7 May at Lacey-Keosauqua SP *Van Buren*

(JWR). The last date for the species included the farthest west reports: 26 May in *Iowa* (JG), *Polk* (AB), *Clay* (LAS), *Carroll* (RES), and 21 in *Boone* (JS).

Kentucky Warbler: First: 2 May at Croton Unit *Lee* (CF) and 5 May at Wau-bonsie SP *Fremont* (KDy). Peak counts of 6 and 7 came from Yellow River SP *Allamakee* (MP, POR). Overshooting migrants were located 14 May at Morse Lake WPA *Wright* (RGo), 19 May at Parker's Woods *Cerro Gordo* (RGo), and 28 May at McCoy WMA *Boone* (DCH).

Common Yellowthroat: Arrived record early near Fairfield *Jefferson* 17 Apr (DCP), and another 20 Apr at Dunbar Sl *Greene* (KVS) was second earliest ever. A high count of 70 was counted 12 May at Hawkeye WA *Johnson* (CJC).

Hooded Warbler: All: a nester at Donnellson Unit *Lee* was first noted 28 Apr (RLC), one found 13 May at Hickory Hill P *Johnson* by Mark Madsen remained to be seen by many until 20 May, and another was singing 26 May far up the *Des Moines* R at Holst SF *Boone* (JS).

American Redstart: First: 1 May at *Marion* and *Cedar Rapids* *Linn* (JOD, BSc); then *Polk*, *Marshall*, and *Story* 2 May (KVS, RIA, MP, SSP).

Cape May Warbler: One was early 2 May at Ames *Story* (SSP), and another was noted 3 May on the ICBC Warbler Walk at Hickory Hill P *Johnson*. Singles were found in ten additional counties in the eastern half of the state, plus a peak of 3 visited Tucker Lutter's yard *Woodbury* 6 May. Last: 13 May at Polk City WA *Polk* (RLC).

Cerulean Warbler: First: 7 May at Lacey-Keosauqua SP *Van Buren* (JWR). Peak numbers of up to 22 were found in *Allamakee* (POR, MP), a surprisingly strong showing for this species of special concern. Prospecting migrants were found 14 May at

Pilot Knob SP *Hancock* (PH) and 20 May at Call SP *Kossuth* (MCK).

Northern Parula: Like Louisiana Waterthrush, this species arrived very early: 21 Mar at Burlington *Des Moines* (JWR)[record early], 26 Mar at Cascade Ravine *Des Moines* (JLF)[second earliest], and 4 Apr at Ledges SP *Boone* (TMH)[third earliest]. A peak of 10 was found 12 May at Lacey-Keosauqua SP *Van Buren* (DCP). Two noted 30 May at Dolliver SP *Webster* (MHB) could mark their northernmost nesting up the *Des Moines* R.

Magnolia Warbler: First: 3 May at Parker's Woods *Cerro Gordo* (RGo), River Valley P *Story* (RIA), and Hickory Hill P *Johnson* (ICBC). Last: 26 May at both Palo M *Linn* (KVS) and Little Sioux WA *Clay* (LAS).

Bay-breasted Warbler: First: 2 May at River Valley P *Story* (SSP), followed by 5 on 5 May at Parker's Woods *Cerro Gordo* (RGo). On 7 May, singles were found at Swan L SP *Carroll* (RIA) and Bacon Creek P *Woodbury* (GLV). They were found in six additional counties, with the last 14 May at Grammer Grove WA *Marshall* (MP).

Blackburnian Warbler: One or two were noted in ten counties from 2 May in *Johnson* (JP) to 25 May in *Humboldt* (ABL). One was found in the west 6 May at Desoto NWR *Harrison* (JT).

Yellow Warbler: First: 25 Apr at Neal Smith NWR *Jasper* (KVS), Otter Creek M *Tama* (JWR), and L Sugema *Van Buren* (CRE).

Chestnut-sided Warbler: Arrived 2 May at Walnut Woods SP *Polk* (RIA) and 3 May at both Squaw Creek P *Linn* (BSc) and Hickory Hill P *Johnson* (CJB). Last: 26 May at Palo M *Linn* KVS) and 28 May at Call SP *Kossuth* (MCK).

Blackpoll Warbler: First up was one at River Valley P *Story* 2 May (SSP). On 3 May, they appeared at Moorehead P *Ida* (PE), Squaw Creek P *Linn* (BSc), and Hickory Hill



Pine Warbler, Jester P. Polk, 15 May 2012. Photograph by Stephen J. Dinsmore, Ames, IA.



Yellow-throated Warbler, Jester P. Polk, 15 May 2012. Photograph by Stephen J. Dinsmore, Ames, IA.

P *Johnson* (ICBC). Out west, the species was also found *Adair*, *Harrison*, *Woodbury*, *Page*, and *Adams* (KVS, JT, GLV, KDy, CJL). Last: 4 on 28 May at Algona *Kossuth* (MCK).

Palm Warbler: First noted 20 Apr at

both Ames *Story* (EO) and George Wyth SP *Black Hawk* (DGE), and then 21 Apr at Seminole Valley P *Linn* (BT). Small numbers were found scattered around the east, with a peak of 6 on 1 May at Hartman Reserve *Black Hawk* (DGE), and 3 on 8 May at Bacon Creek P *Woodbury* (RR) in the west.

Pine Warbler: Several birders observed the territorial birds at the Donnellson Unit *Lee* nesting area beginning 24 Mar (CF). As migration wound down, one was photographed 15 May at Jester P *Polk* (SJD).

Yellow-rumped Warbler: Migration began in the se 21 Mar at Lacey-Keosauqua SP *Van Buren* (JWR). Peak counts of 25–55 spanned the period 19 Apr to 4 May, and the final sighting was 18 May at Stone SP *Woodbury* (SJD).

Yellow-throated Warbler: The third early-spring southeastern warbler also set new records: 3 on 21 Mar at Lacey-Keosauqua SP *Van Buren* (JWR)[record early] and 29 Mar at Ledges SP *Boone* (SJD)[second earliest]. Predominately found along the major rivers, one was located 14 May along Spirit L *Dickinson* (DAB), and another was singing 15 May in downtown Madrid *Boone* (SJD).

Black-throated Green Warbler: Unlike many others, this species didn't arrive early: 1 May at both Marion *Linn* (JOD) and Sweet M *Bremer* (DGE), and 2 May at River Valley P *Story* (SSP) and Hendrickson M *Story* (MP). It did, however, depart early: 16 May was the last date at Black Hawk P *Black Hawk* (DGE), Neal Smith NWR *Jasper* (KVS), and 2 at Hickory Hill P *Johnson* (JP).

Canada Warbler: First: 11 May at Waterworks P *Polk* (JB). Outside of the IOU Spring Meeting field trips, there were only six other reports of 1 or 2 birds, the last 26 May at Grammer Grove WA *Marshall* (MP).

Wilson's Warbler: First: 1 May at Sweet M *Bremer* (DGE), 2 May at Ada



Clay-colored Sparrow, Cayler Prairie State Preserve, Dickinson, 20 May 2012. Photograph by Mark Brown, Iowa City, IA.



Summer Tanager, Lee, 3 May 2012. Photograph by Paul O. Roisen, Sioux City, IA.

Hayden P *Story* (WO), and 3 May at Squaw Creek P *Linn* (BSc). Reports were almost exclusively of single birds, including 13 May in Adams in the west (CJL), but included 4 on 7 May at Swan L SP *Carroll*

(RIA). Last: 17 May at Hickory Hill P *Johnson* (CJB).

Yellow-breasted Chat: First reported 25 Apr in *Lee* (CF) [second earliest], and then from *Appanoose*, *Jasper*, *Mahaska*, *Jefferson*, and *Van Buren* (TJ, KVS, JS, DCP, TMH).

GREEN-TAILED TOWHEE: Photographs documented a quick visit by this species to the yard of Jon and Joyce Bahrenfus near Ogden *Boone* the morning of 17 May.

Spotted Towhee: Two on 4 Mar at Riverton WA *Fremont* (KDy) may have wintered nearby, but 22 Apr at Mason City *Cerro Gordo* (CJF) and 2 on 25 Apr at Manti *Fremont* (KDy) were migrants.

Eastern Towhee: First migratory movement was noted 13 Mar in *Boone* (LGD) and 19 Mar at Ada Hayden P *Story* (WO).

American Tree Sparrow: Last: 23 Apr at Chichauqua WA *Polk* (DTh).

Chipping Sparrow: Definitely earlier than average: 17 Mar at Brenton Arboretum *Dallas* (JB), 18 Mar near Fairfield *Jefferson* (DCP), 19 Mar in *Boone* (LGD), and 21 Mar at Ames *Story* (TMH).

Clay-colored Sparrow: One was singing record early 2 Apr at Des Moines *Polk* (DAk), then not until 26 Apr at Algona *Kossuth* (MCK). Most: 10 on 28 Apr in *Page* (KDy). One or two were found at other scattered locations during migration, then territorial birds were noted 20 May at Caylor Pr *Dickinson* (MHB), 27 May at Pilot Knob SP *Hancock* (JB), and 30 May at Harmon L *Winnebago* (DS).

Field Sparrow: First: 17 Mar near Fairfield *Jefferson* (DCP), L Rathbun *Appanoose* (RLC), and in *Decatur* (JS).

Vesper Sparrow: First noted 26 Mar in *Lee* (JLF, JWR) and 31 Mar in *Polk* (KVS).

Lark Sparrow: Found second earliest

ever 10 Apr at Croton Unit *Lee* (CF) and Nellen M *Mills* (KDy). One found 28 May at Myre Sl *Winnebago* (BT) was away from the species' usual areas.

Savannah Sparrow: The first report was of 2 from Otter Creek M *Tama* 11 Mar (TGS).

Grasshopper Sparrow: One singing 3 Apr at Neal Smith NWR *Jasper* (KVS) was record early; the next was 14 Apr at Dunbar Sl *Greene* (SJD).

Henslow's Sparrow: One singing at the Kellerton Grasslands *Ringgold* 31 Mar (DTh) tied the second earliest date, and several tied the third earliest on 2 Apr at Neal Smith NWR *Jasper* (KVS) and in *Lee* (CF). One at Riverton WA *Fremont* 18 Apr (KDy) may have been a migrant, but the species was found later in likely nesting areas of nine additional counties.

Le Conte's Sparrow: Only 3 birds: 17 Mar at Errington M *Polk* (AB, JG), 14 Apr at Sweet M *Bremer* (TGS), and 30 Apr at Big M *Butler* (TSS).

Nelson's Sparrow: Just one: 12 May at Harrier M *Boone* (WO).

Fox Sparrow: Already moving by 2 Mar in *Jefferson* (DCP) and 4 Mar in *Fremont* (KDy), one was singing at Algona *Kossuth* by 14 Mar (MCK). The high counts were 54 on 18 Mar at Chichauqua WA *Polk* (BE) and 31 on 28 Mar at Sparks Cem *Boone* (LGD). Then they were gone: 3 on 7 Apr at Pilot Knob SP *Hancock* (JB) were the only Apr birds reported to IOU or eBird.

Lincoln's Sparrow: The first was second earliest ever 25 Mar at Squaw Creek P *Linn* (BSc), then not until mid-Apr, and then only single birds. A late straggler was at Palo M *Linn* 26 May (KVS).

White-throated Sparrow: First migrants: 17 Mar near Fairfield *Jefferson* (DCP) and 4 on 21 Mar in *Madison* (POR). Last: 16 May at Amana Woods *Iowa* (CJB).



Barred Owl, Iowa City, Johnson, 21 May 2012. Photograph by Jim Scheib, Iowa City, IA.



Palm Warbler, Anderson L, Hamilton, 8 May 2012. Photograph by Stephen J. Dinsmore, Ames, IA.



Fox Sparrow, Boone, 20 March 2012. Photograph by Larry Dau, Boone, IA.



Curlew Sandpiper, Hawkeye WA, Johnson, 25 May 2012. Photograph by Jim Forde, Cedar Rapids, IA.



Dickcissel, Fremont, 5 May 2012. Photograph by Paul O. Roisen, Sioux City, IA.



White-throated Sparrow, Boone, 28 April 2012. Photograph by Larry Dau, Boone, IA.



Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Boone, 9 May 2012.
Photograph by Larry Dau, Boone, IA.

Harris's Sparrow: Began showing up in numbers with 4 on 17 Mar at Hendrickson M Story (MP) and 4 on 22 Mar at Ada Hayden P Story (WO). The high count of 30 also came from Story on 2 May (CJL). The last singles were 10 May at Algona Kosuth (MCK) and 11 May at Ada Hayden P (WO).

White-crowned Sparrow: Nine on 4 Mar at Riverton Fremont (KDy) may have wintered nearby, as most reports were of 1 or 2 birds that didn't start popping up until the end of Mar. Six were found 6 May in Linn and 7 May in Johnson (both BT), and the last was 10 May at Ada Hayden P Story (WO).

Dark-eyed Junco: An Oregon Junco visited Aaron Brees' yard Polk 12 Mar. Two juncos remained into May: 1 May at Roland Story (Curt Fisher) and 6 May at Desoto Bend NWR Harrison (JT).

Summer Tanager: First: 25 Apr at Wabash Trace Page (KDy) and 2 May at Fairmount Cem Scott (WMZ). Ten were at Waubonsie SP Fremont by 4 May (KVS) and 5 were found in Appanoose 5 May (TJ). A wandering 1st year male was photographed at a farm near Britt Hancock before 12 May (BaE). Nesting occurred as far north as Ledges SP Boone (SJD) and a pair was found at Oak Ridge Cons Area Woodbury 18 May (GLV).

Scarlet Tanager: The two earliest were both 25 Apr: in Appanoose (TJ) and at Gibson RA Henry (CRE). High counts of 8 were made during migration 10 May at both Yellow River SF Allamakee (MP) and Ledges SP Boone (SJD), and then again after most birds had moved on 26 May at Brown's Woods SP Polk (AB).

Rose-breasted Grosbeak: First: 17 Apr in Scott (RAS)[record early], followed by 25 Apr in Appanoose (TJ), Poweshiek (RVE), and Henry (CRE).

Blue Grosbeak: Two birders walked into Auldon Bar... the punchline is they found the first Blue Grosbeak of the season in Fremont 6 May (KVS). Away from the Missouri R counties, one was at Jester P Polk 20 May (RLC), but there were no reports on the Carroll population.

Indigo Bunting: Steve Harvey had the first come to his feeder in Clarke 30 Apr, the next was 1 May near Fairfield Jefferson (DCP). Twenty-five were tallied 12 May at Hawkeye WA Johnson (CJC).

Dickcissel: May 1st was move-in day in the sw: 2 were in Page (KDy), and another at Riverton WA Fremont (JLF). It took until 2 May for Dickcissels to reach Neal Smith WA Jasper (KVS). The peak count was 30 on 27 May in Iowa (CJC).

Bobolink: Arrived 2 May at Donnellson Unit Lee (CF) and 3 May at Brenton Sl Dallas (JB). Most: 22 filled a field at Dun-

bar Sl *Greene* 7 May (RIA), while 35 did the same in *Monona* 12 May (GLV).

Eastern Meadowlark: First: 2 on 3 Mar near *Fairfield Jefferson* (DCP) and 2 on 5 Mar at *Centerville Appanoose* (RLC). Twenty-five showed their abundance around *Amana Iowa* 19 May (AJ), while their rarity in the west was noted by 2 on 12 May at the *Prairie Heritage Center O'Brien* (LAS) and a single 26 May along the *Floyd R Woodbury* (RR).

Yellow-headed Blackbird: Flocks first arrived in the west: 14 on 13 Apr at *Sandhill L Woodbury* (GLV) and 18 on 14 Apr at *Nellen M Mills* (JG). The farthest east were 3 on 25 Apr at *Otter Creek M Tama* (JWR).

Rusty Blackbird: Eighty poured into *Broken Kettle Grasslands Plymouth* 1 Mar (TLu) and 15 were in *Hardin* 2 Mar (MP). Other large groups included 88 on 15 Mar around *Trumbull L Clay* (LAS), 60 on 16 Mar at *Princeton WA Scott* (CRE), and 70 on 7 Apr at *Myre Sl Winnebago* (JB). Last: 3 on 22 Apr at *Ada Hayden P Story* (WO) and 24 Apr at *USNWR Kossuth* (MCK).

Brewer's Blackbird: Up to 15 were reported from nine locations from 7 Mar at *Ada Hayden P Story* (WO) to 28 Apr at *Nellen M Mills* (KDy). Twenty-six were at *Dunbar Sl Greene* 1 Apr (SJD), and the final tied second latest 7 May in *Dallas* (RIA).

Great-tailed Grackle: First: 3 on 11 Mar at *Otter Creek M Tama* (TGS) and 2 on 14 Mar at *Gray's L Polk* (JB). Reports of up to 14 ranged from the sw, through the central, and east to *Otter Creek M* (m.ob.).

Orchard Oriole: Reported first in the se: 25 Apr in both *Lee* (CF) and *Van Buren* (CRE), followed by 28 Apr in *Jefferson* (DCP).

BULLOCK'S ORIOLE: The bird wintering around the *Masinda* residence *Ottumwa Wapello* was last reported 21 Mar (POR).

Baltimore Oriole: First: 25 Apr at both *Coralville Johnson* (JBe) and *Gray's L Polk* (JB), followed by 26 Apr at *Ada Hayden P Story* (WO). Fifty were counted by Chris Caster 12 May at *Hawkeye WA Johnson*.

Purple Finch: Up to 5 were noted from ten counties across the eastern half of the state (m.ob.). Last: 19 Apr at *Johnston Polk* (DTh) and 27 Apr at *Greenbelt L Black Hawk* (DGE).

White-winged Crossbill: All were found in cemeteries: up to 20 on 1-2 Mar at *Algona Kossuth* (JN, MCK), several on 3 Mar at *Storm L Buena Vista* (TJ), 60 on 7 Mar at *Graceland Cem Woodbury* (GLV), and 11 still at *Fairmount Cem Scott* 14 Mar (MR).

Common Redpoll: All: 2 on 1 Mar at *Hendrickson M Story* (SJD), 2 Mar in *rural Jefferson* (DCP), 3 and 5 Mar at *Saylorville Res Polk* (JB, DTh), 3 on 11 Mar in *Poweshick* (RVE), and a single 14 Mar at *Algona Kossuth* (MCK).

Pine Siskin: Possible nesting occurred at *Sioux City Woodbury*, where Jerry Von Ehwegeen hosted up to 8 at his feeders through 28 Apr. Nesting took place at *Algona Kossuth*, with at least 3 family groups and one nest located in *Riverview Cem* (MCK). Other late reports included 9 May at *Sparks Cem Boone* (LGD), 14 May at *Big Wall L Wright* (RGo), 18 May at *Ottosen Humboldt* (JN), and 2 on 27 May at *Ankeny Polk* (MJ).

Eurasian Tree Sparrow: The species was reported from nine counties in its normal range (m.ob.).

CONTRIBUTORS

Danny Akers	DAk	Ankeny	Tom Lawson	TL	Adel
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Report of the Records Committee for 2011

Ann M. Johnson

One new species was added to the Iowa checklist in 2011. In late June, a Broad-billed Hummingbird (#425) made a brief stop at a residence in Charles City where it was observed and photographed by a few birders from northern Iowa.

A total of 35 reports were reviewed during the year including one from a previous year. A number of other documentations were reviewed by the seasonal field reports editors for supporting evidence of reported observations. The committee thanks everyone for timely submission of reports so that our publications offer the most current information available. Appreciation is also extended to all who enter their reports on-line. This is creating an extensive database of rarity reports which should be helpful to researchers.

Committee members for 2011 with years in which their terms expire were: Stephen J. Dinsmore (2011), Rita Goranson (2012), Ross Silcock (2013), Chris Edwards (2014), Aaron Brees (2015), Matthew Keene (2016), and Ann Johnson (secretary, appointed by the committee). Jay Gilliam was nominated by the committee and subsequently appointed by the Board of Directors to fill a regular term beginning in 2012.

Status changes to the Iowa checklist are based on the number of reports during the previous ten years. The following status changes were approved at the annual committee meeting on 18 September 2011:

From Accidental to Casual – Barrow's Goldeneye, Brown Pelican, and Glossy Ibis. More frequent reports of these species indicate some range expansion.

From Regular to Casual – Bohemian Waxwing and White-winged Crossbill. A drop in reports of these two northern visitors is similar to the beginning of the disappearance of Evening Grosbeak from the state.

From Regular to Accidental – Black-headed Gull. This species became an anomaly in the Iowa checklist because of the annual appearance each year at Spirit Lake. The apparent demise of what was no doubt a single bird has abruptly moved the species' status back to accidental.

Other business discussed at the 18 September 2011 meeting included approval of a new Operations Manual which updates the committee procedures to be more in line with conducting business electronically. This manual is publically available on the website at <http://iowabirds.org/IOU/Records/Documents/RCProceduresManual.pdf>.

Each record reviewed by the Records Committee is assigned a six-digit number (year and sequence number) which is included in this report for future reference. Records are classified as follows: A = Accepted (-S = specimen, -P = photograph, -R = recording, -D = documentation) and NA = Not Accepted. In order to be accepted, a record must receive 7 votes on the initial review or 6 votes on a subsequent review. The subcategories A-S, A-P, and A-R indicate that physical evidence supports the identification, and records are sub-classified based on a majority vote. References to *IBL* are the page of the Field Reports or a special note in *Iowa Bird Life* where the record is cited.

Published notes and previous citations may contain more details. An * indicates a previously uncited documentation.

In the past, a separate photo file was maintained by the Records Committee. With the proliferation of digital images being submitted, as well as documentations having unique identification numbers, these photos are now being archived as a part of the documentation and are not assigned a separate number. The classification in the entries below will indicate the presence of an identifiable photo with the record.

A number of significant records that would add to our knowledge of Iowa birds are unfortunately missed each year. Good photos should at least have some minimal details entered to identify who, what, when and where. Often a snapshot or recording picked up on a smartphone may provide just enough corroboration for acceptance. Written documentations are more difficult and, as a lower level of evidence, require more detail and logic to be accepted for use by future researchers. The committee relies on the observer to paint a picture with words of what was seen and how it was identified. This is seldom available from listserv posts or brief details submitted with seasonal field reports. A few documented details on size and structure, along with a description of what was seen and consideration of any similar species, can make all the difference between an accepted and not accepted report. The committee can only evaluate the evidence that is submitted. **The committee's purpose is not to pass judgment on the validity of a particular sighting or the birding skills of a reporter but rather on the evidence provided.**

2011 RECORDS ACCEPTED

Barrow's Goldeneye: 30 Nov at Eagle Point P. in *Clinton* (2011-32, A-D, IBL 82:6, 68).

Neotropic Cormorant: 2-7 Apr at Bays Branch in *Guthrie* (2011-04, A-P, IBL 81:127), 12 May at Goose L. in *Greene* (2011-16, A-D, IBL 81:127), and 14 May at DeSoto NWR in *Harrison* (2011-18, A-D, IBL 81:127).

Glossy Ibis: 17-27 Apr at Secret L. in *Fremont* (2011-08, A-P, IBL 81:128).

Ferruginous Hawk: 15 Oct at Hitchcock N.A. in *Pottawattamie* (2011-31, A-D, IBL 82:10 [Orsag 2012]).

Black Rail: 27 May to 2 Jun at Hoosier Creek in *Johnson* (2011-23, A-R, IBL 81:130;178 [Edwards 2011]).

King Rail: 19 Jun at Dunbar Slough in *Greene* (2011-26, A-D, IBL 81:178).

Snowy Plover: 22-23 May at Riverton W.A. in *Fremont* (2011-21, A-P, IBL 81:130).

Ruff: 7 Apr at Ada Hayden Heritage P.

in *Story* (2011-05, A-P, IBL 81:132) and 10 to 11 May at Inkpaduta Access in *Woodbury* (2011-13, A-D, IBL 81:132).

Black-legged Kittiwake: 31 Dec 2011 to 1 Jan 2012 at Saylorville Res. in *Polk* (2011-35, A-P, IBL 82:70).

Laughing Gull: 19-20 May at Lake Manawa in *Pottawattamie* (2011-20, A-P, IBL 81:133).

Iceland Gull: 10 Dec 2011 to 6 Jan 2012 at Polk County Landfill and Saylorville Res. in *Polk* (2011-34, A-P, IBL 82:70).

Great Black-backed Gull: 12-26 Jan at Montrose in *Lee* (2011-01, A-D, IBL 81:65).

Broad-billed Hummingbird: 24-25 Jun at Charles City in *Floyd* (2011-27, A-P, IBL 81:181 [Montgomery and Hertzel 2011]).

Bewick's Wren: 8-17 June near Kalona in *Johnson* (2011-25, A-D, IBL 81:182).

Mountain Bluebird: 8 Jan at Little Sioux River in *Cherokee* (2011-03, A-P, IBL 81:68).

Curve-billed Thrasher: 14 Nov to 5

Feb 2012 at Lucas in *Lucas* (2011-33, A-P, *IBL* 82:72 [Skrade and Dinsmore 2012]).

Black-headed Grosbeak: 6-7 May near Norwalk in *Warren* (2011-12, A-P, *IBL* 81:148) and 20-23 May near Booneville in *Madison* (2011-22, A-D, *IBL* 81:148).

Lazuli Bunting: 14-17 May near Grand Junction in *Greene* (2011-17, A-P, *IBL* 81:148) and 30 May at Wildcat Cave Access in *Hardin* (2011-24, A-D, *IBL* 81:148).

Painted Bunting: 12 May at Dunbar Slough in *Greene* (2011-15, A-P, *IBL* 81:148 [Dinsmore and Harms 2011]).

OLD RECORDS REVIEWED FOR FIRST TIME

Painted Bunting: 16 June 2000 n of Denison in *Crawford* (2011-AA, A-D, *Don Poggensee).

2011 RECORDS NOT ACCEPTED

Tricolored Heron: Although some parts of the description were solid for this species, others could have been used to describe a Green Heron. Since the only similar species discussed was Great Blue Heron, coupled with observer inexperience and an observation without optics and in the rain, the committee felt that Green Heron could not be eliminated (2011-29).

Ferruginous Hawk: Although the description was suggestive, more detail on age, the feathering of the tarsi, and the shape and location of the white wing panels was needed to unequivocally eliminate the more expected Red-tailed Hawk (2011-07).

Black Rail: On a split vote this brief observation of a bird in flight fell just a bit short for conclusive evidence (2011-10).

Laughing Gull: The description indicated some features of a Laughing Gull but others fit better with Franklin's (2011-28).

California Gull: The description was

too brief to rule out a small sub-adult Herring Gull (2011-30).

Great Black-backed Gull: The first report generated some good discussion about identifying large black-backed gulls in Iowa. It was determined that the description could not eliminate other species and we should not just assume that Great Black-backed is the default (2011-06). Spring gulls can be notoriously difficult with feather wear and molt creating some interesting combinations of appearance. The consensus on the second report was that the description and photos were of a spring first-cycle Herring Gull (2011-11).

Sprague's Pipit: A report from experienced observers may well have been correct but the identification was based solely on behavioral characteristics. With an extremely early date and the observers' failed attempts to get any physical description of the bird, even though they tried, the committee felt that the level of evidence left this one as "one that got away" (2011-02).

Prairie Warbler: Although probably a correct identification, this report was based on call alone with no visual observation of the bird. Committee members have had various experiences with one species singing the song of another, including a Northern Parula singing a Prairie Warbler song, and as a whole are conservative with adding heard-only rare birds to the record (2011-14).

Painted Bunting: A female reported in conjunction with the accepted male above was not sufficiently described to eliminate a female Indigo Bunting. Female buntings are difficult to identify and require careful details (2011-AA).

Brambling: A report of two birds at a feeder at a very unlikely time of year and with minimal description precluded any absolute identification or elimination of escaped cage birds (2011-19).

LITERATURE CITED

Dinsmore, S. J. and T. M. Harms 2011. Painted Bunting at Dunbar Slough. *Iowa Bird Life* 81:158.

Edwards, C. R. 2011. Black Rail in Johnson County. *Iowa Bird Life* 81:156-157.

Montgomery, E.. and P. Hertzel 2011. Broad-billed Hummingbird in Floyd County. *Iowa Bird Life* 81:189-190.

Orsag, M. 2012. Hitchcock Nature Center Hawk Watch and Banding, Fall 2011. *Iowa Bird Life* 82:28-33.

Skrade, P.D.B. and S.J. Dinsmore 2012. Curve-billed Thrasher in Lucas County. *Iowa Bird Life* 82:77.

Thanks to Paul Hertzel for reviewing this report and checking all of the inclusive dates against field reports data so that this report is an accurate representation of rare bird sightings in Iowa.

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Curlew Sandpiper at Hawkeye Wildlife Area

Jim Forde

The Curlew Sandpiper is a bird every shorebirder wants to find. On 24 May 2012 I was birding the north side of Hawkeye Wildlife Area in Johnson County and was fortunate to discover a female Curlew Sandpiper with other shorebirds at a pool along Amana Road. When scoping shorebirds it's best to have the sun behind you and get as close as possible. The long pool I was birding that morning required a mile walk to its east end so I could have just that advantage. Working west I surveyed all the shorebirds and eventually neared the west end where a pair of Short-billed Dowitchers and a third bird loafed. The third bird had a peculiar bill that was unlike the dowitchers, being shorter and distinctly decurved near the tip. At a distance the relative size of the dowitchers wasn't apparent so I was asking myself if a dowitcher could have a bill like that; perhaps an aberrant individual? The other possibility was a Curlew Sandpiper and that would definitely require a closer look. So I moved closer but the birds had disappeared. I was quite frustrated and now had to chase the bird and walk all the way back to where I started, although I wasn't too worried about it leaving the pool. When I finally relocated the shorebird there was little doubt it was a prized Curlew Sandpiper, a somewhat colorful female. The bird was plump and short-necked, similar to the shape of a Dunlin, although it had slightly longer legs. The slender, slightly decurved bill was distinctive. The head, neck, breast, and belly were mottled reddish-brown, suggesting that the bird was a female. The bird remained at this location through 25 May when there was a mass turnover of shorebirds, and during its stay it was seen by many other birders.

The Curlew Sandpiper is primarily a Eurasian species and has been recorded in Iowa on four previous occasions since 1985. All sightings have been in a narrow window in mid- to late May, including a previous record from Hawkeye Wildlife Area on 13 May 1988 (Bendorf, C. J., and T. H. Kent. 1988. Curlew Sandpiper at Coralville Reservoir. *Iowa Bird Life* 58:87-89.).

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Green-tailed Towhee in Boone County

Jon and Joyce Bahrenfus

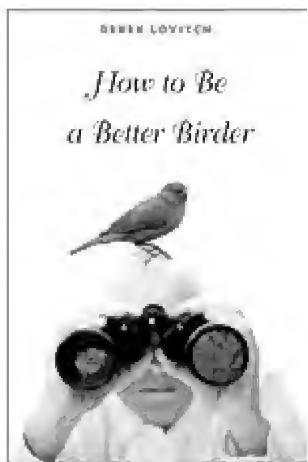
Early on the morning on 17 May 2012 we were working as usual around our house northeast of Ogden in Boone County. At 6:50 A.M. we looked out our kitchen window and saw a Green-tailed Towhee feeding on the lawn adjacent to Joyce's herb garden just 4 m away. The bird fed on the lawn for a couple of minutes and then disappeared into the taller vegetation bordering our house. We recognized the bird before looking it up because we have seen Green-tailed Towhees many times during camping and hiking trips in the southwestern U.S. It was a small, sparrow-like bird, noticeably smaller than the Eastern Towhees we see regularly, but still having a slender, long-tailed appearance. Other features noted included a crisply defined white throat, a rusty cap, the olive green back and tail, and the dark gray underparts. The bird did not vocalize. The bird later briefly reappeared on the lawn, but was not seen thereafter.

The Green-tailed Towhee is a rare but regular vagrant east of its normal range where it usually occurs either in spring or in winter at feeders. There are two previous Iowa records, both from May and June, the most recent in 1990 in West Des Moines.

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Book Review

Paul D. B. Skrade



How to be a Better Birder by Derek Lovitch. 2012. 192 pages, color photographs, Princeton University Press, Princeton, ISBN 978-0-691-14448-1. \$19.95 (paperback).

I will be the first to admit that I am not a great birder, so the title of this book certainly caught my eye. However, I have been lucky enough to see great birders in action in Iowa and elsewhere. As I got deeper into Lovitch's book I remembered comments I have heard these birders make about the importance of habitat, weather, and timing and finding good birds. Time after time these are the people who produce first state records, lead outstanding field trips, and discover rarities in places not often birded by others. So, what are the characteristics of a really good

birder? As I soon discovered, *How to be a Better Birder* offers quite a few good suggestions.

As the author is quick to point out in the Introduction, this book is not aimed at beginning birders and he expects readers to have a basic knowledge of birding terminology. His goal is to introduce the reader to new ways of thinking about birding and present some methodologies that not everyone will be familiar with. Some examples of these techniques are the focus of specific chapters and include birding at night, birding with geography, and birding with weather, among others. Although he provides a lot of detail in each chapter related to the specific topics, he also suggests additional books and websites to supplement the material. Some of these include the US Geological Survey-Patuxent Wildlife Research Center's bird identification website (<http://www.mbr-pwrc.usgs.gov/bbs/ident.html>) and scientific articles related weather, radar, and migration like "Radar ornithology and biological conservation" (Gauthreaux and Belser 2003).

Lovitch has an affinity for sparrows and much of the book details his experiences with the family Emberizidae. He uses great examples of these species in his chapter on "Advanced Field Identification" – the "Whole Bird and More" approach to birding, going beyond the General Impression of Size and Shape (GISS). The author encourages the reader to consider the "how, what, where, and when's" like "How does the bird move? What is it shaped like? Where is it feeding?" One example I thought particularly memorable used this technique and combined it with the field marks. Here is his theoretical example bird: "... a robust, long-tailed, relatively dark sparrow flies out of a grassy edge and up into a bush..." and because we know about the whole bird and more we instantly start to think about the genus *Melospiza*. His whole bird idea also includes field marks and he uses a nice art analogy to describe the features of the Song, Swamp, and Lincoln's sparrows, relating

them to an oil painting, a watercolor, and a pen-and-ink drawing respectively to relate the patterns of marks and streaking.

The second chapter, “Birding by Habitat”, encourages us to not just learn bird identification but plant identification as well. Lovitch argues that bird finding can be easier if you take habitat into consideration. However, he also wants the reader to think about the bigger picture and knowing more about the shrubs, trees, and flowers around us will lead to a greater appreciation for biodiversity and development of a conservation ethic. Again the author has a nice example using sparrows, but in this case it is birds in the genus *Ammodramus*. He guides birding trips at a 3,100 acre marsh in southern Maine that has both Nelson’s and Saltmarsh sparrows and although this is a really large area to cover he knows that Nelson’s prefer the margins with taller *Spartina alterniflora* while the Saltmarsh are usually found in areas with the much smaller *Spartina patens*. So, depending upon which bird he is targeting he focuses on patches dominated by one or the other plant species.

The next two chapters, “Birding with Geography” and “Birding and Weather”, do a nice job of helping the reader understand that looking for vagrants is a matter of stacking the probabilities of seeing an interesting bird in your favor. Combining unique geographic features that birds might be drawn to (such as a large lake, long peninsula, or an isolated hill) with tropical storms or a long period of southerly winds changing to a sweeping cold front from the north means that birds like a Roseate Spoonbill and Sabine’s Gull can be on the same large lake in Central Iowa less than a week apart! Birders have become increasingly attuned to following weather maps, but now we use radar for more than just looking at precipitation, as he describes in chapter 5, “Birding at Night”. Understanding nocturnal movements of birds and recognizing flight calls has opened up a whole new realm of birding and undoubtedly increased many yard lists.

While the author gives a great presentation about how to find vagrants, the book is about more than just increasing your list. The author challenges us to learn more about micro-habitats, improve our note-taking, and to “Bird with a purpose” by contributing to citizen science projects like the Christmas Bird Count (CBC) and Breeding Bird Survey. I have found my participation in CBCs to be incredibly rewarding and really enjoy the camaraderie of covering a count circle with many of the same people year after year. The discussions we have had at compilations about changes in habitat, availability of fruit crops, and fluctuations in populations have made me a better birder and I would like to think that our contributions to science and society are making us better people as well.

LITERATURE CITED

Gauthreaux, S. A., Jr., and C. G. Belser. 2003. Radar ornithology and biological conservation. *Auk* 120:266–277.

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Fifty Years Ago in *Iowa Bird Life*

James J. Dinsmore

The September 1962 issue was a rather thin 24 pages. This fact was emphasized by a rather lengthy plea from editor Petersen asking readers to submit articles and also reports to the new and slowly growing field notes section. The lead article was a short one by long-time contributor William Youngworth, noting the rarity of Song Sparrows in summer in the Missouri River valley south of Sioux City and also in the counties north of Sioux City. He listed some of the few records he had in some 40 years of birding in that region.

Among several shorter articles, one described nesting Eastern Bluebirds that were banded in Davenport and another reported on the 25th anniversary of the Cedar Falls Audubon Society. Finally, Elton Fawks provided some data on the number of Bald Eagles found during winter near various dams along the Mississippi River.

The field notes section filled almost two pages of the journal, evidence of some growth but still modest compared to recent years. Among the more interesting birds reported for summer 1962 were two Swainson's Hawks near Waterloo and Cedar Falls, an injured Barn Owl at Goldfield, and several pairs of nesting Say's Phoebe near Sioux City. The most interesting general note was one by Myrle Burk describing finding two Sprague's Pipits near La Porte City in late May. The journal ends with list of members and several book reviews. Among the more interesting of those were a review of Harold Mayfield's book on Kirtland's Warblers, a classic on the basic biology of that endangered species, and another review of the first volume of a planned Handbook of North American Birds series. Reviewer Fred Pierce somewhat prophetically notes that bird students will await the appearance of future volumes of that series with impatience; only five volumes were published and the series was never completed.

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Iowa Ornithologists' Union

Fall Business Meeting

25 August 2012

The IOU fall general membership business meeting was held at the Fischer Community Center, Marshalltown, Iowa. President Paul Roisen called the meeting to order at 4:35 p.m. Also in attendance were Tom Schilke, vice president; Stuart Sparkman, secretary; Mary Beth Hunt, treasurer; board members Don Brown, Keith Dyche, Karen Viste-Sparkman, Dennis Thompson; and members of the organization.

Secretary's Report: Since the minutes from the spring 2012 meeting have not been published, President Roisen declared it necessary for the secretary to read the spring 2012 minutes to the membership. Don Brown moved that the reading of the minutes to the body be waived. Rick Hollis seconded. The motion was carried by unanimous consent. The minutes from the spring 2012 meeting were accepted without inspection.

Treasurer's Report: Mary Beth Hunt reported that the total checking, savings, and CD balance as of 31 July 2012 is \$58,836.40. Income is up approximately \$4,000 and expenses are up approximately \$6,300 over the same time period last year. IOU should meet or be under the net loss budgeted for 2012 (\$10,000, of which \$8,000 was designated for Conservation/Projects.) Members may peruse financial reports for specific details on the IOU website.

Board of Directors action since spring meeting: The following action occurred via e-mail. In June 2012, President Paul Roisen invited the IOU Board of Directors to deliberate about whether the IOU could be used as a vehicle for contributing

to Southern Wings. Shane Patterson had presented information on the Southern Wings program to the membership at the spring 2012 meeting in Iowa City. Paul informed the board that donors were already waiting for this board action in order to use IOU to contribute to this endeavor. Karen Viste-Sparkman moved that IOU receive designated contributions to be used as the IOU donation to the program to be matched up to \$1,000 with funds from our treasury. Tom Schilke seconded the motion. Motion carried 8-0 with one abstaining and one not responding.

Membership Coordinator: Chair Pam Allen was not present, so the report was given by President Roisen. We currently have 396 members, up 8 from last year. Twenty-nine members did not renew for 2012.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Records: Ann Johnson reported that the annual meeting of the Records Committee will be held on 21 October 2012. At this meeting the group will discuss nominating a replacement for Rita Goranson, whose six-year term ends this year. The group will also be evaluating species status. On the official state checklist, falcons have been moved

away from hawks and in front of woodpeckers per the most recent AOU checklist. The committee encourages people if at all possible to obtain a photographic image of rare birds to include in a report, and they remind birders that bin-scoping with a smart phone can be effective.

Publications: Ann Johnson requested that membership help keep the IOU website current through updated directions to birding sites and updated information on dates and times of meetings, field trips, and other events. Ann Johnson reported that all who requested to receive the IOU newsletter electronically are no longer being mailed a hard copy. Over time this may have a significant cost benefit for the organization. Old newsletters are being scanned by the company that did the same for *Iowa Bird Life* and will soon be available on-line. Steve Dinsmore reported that *Iowa Bird Life* is running behind schedule due in part to the loss of some editors. Publications editors need assistance from the membership through volunteering of time and submitting materials for inclusion in IBL. A spring field notes editor is currently needed. Articles and high quality digital photos are very welcome, as are comments and criticism of the journal itself. Members willing to help can contact Steve directly.

Projects: Bill Scheible reported a banner year for this committee, in their mission to support projects which further the IOUs purpose: to identify, study, and protect birds. The committee received 13 applications this year asking for approximately \$28,000. The committee was budgeted \$5,000 for this year and successfully sought an additional \$3,000 from the board of directors. The committee was able to fully or partially fund nine of the thirteen proj-

ects. Specific information on the projects can be accessed through the IOU website. One of these projects mentioned by Bill is Iowa Young Birders, spearheaded by Carl Bendorf. Carl was present and thanked the committee for the grant. He reported that two field trips have taken place already, and the binoculars funded by the IOU for this purpose have been well used by the youth.

Membership: Doug Harr reported that four display panels (including three new ones funded by the IOU) will be distributed around the state to Muscatine, Ogden, Iowa City, and Sioux City. He encouraged members to put them into use at various community events around Iowa in order to promote IOU, birds, and bird conservation. Anyone wishing to use one of the panels should contact the person who is storing the display panel closest to them from among Karen Disbrow (Iowa City), the Rundquists (Sioux City), Doug Harr (Boone) or the Muscatine County Conservation Board (Muscatine). Flyers and photographs on the displays can be customized to reflect the group using the panel. Two new members of the committee are Rick Hollis and Paul Skrade. Paul will be developing a Facebook page for IOU. The Membership Committee will propose to the board that term limits be eliminated for members of this committee. They also would like the name of the committee to be changed to "Membership and Promotion Committee". They have started advertising our IOU meetings through various sites on-line. President Roisen clarified that the committee can have seven members but currently only has four.

Library/Historical: Hank Zaletel was not present. President Roisen presented the report. This year the committee worked to assemble a complete run of the IOU

News (1985-2010) to digitize the newsletters and have them accessible to members through the IOU website. This has already been done with *Iowa Bird Life*. In May, Tom Kent donated a complete set and the board authorized funds to complete this project. *IOU News* will be scanned for electronic access by ArcaSearch of Paynesville, Minnesota. The committee expects this project to be complete by the end of 2012.

OTHER BUSINESS

President Roisen publicly thanked Shane Patterson and Billy Reiter-Marolf for their work on the Breeding Bird Atlas Project II. Immediately before this business meeting, Shane reported on the progress of this project. There have been many new data collected since our spring meeting. This is the last year of the BBA data collection period. The objective is to enhance understanding and management of Iowa's birds. Shane briefly reviewed for attendees the protocol of block selection and data collection. Participants have logged 10,552 field hours, including more than 3,500 hours in 2012 alone. A total of 196 species have been detected and 168 species have been confirmed as nesters. These numbers are comparable to the results of BBA I. A report focusing specifically on night birds was presented. Much progress has been made this summer. The data collection and entry period ends in October 2012.

Doug Harr gave an overview of the Southern Wings program, which sends money from the United States to Latin America and the Caribbean to preserve wintering habitat for birds that breed in North America. The Iowa DNR is looking for pri-

vate partners in this venture. An anonymous donor has offered \$1,000 in matching funds for contributions from IOU members to this project. Member contributions should be received by 1 October 2012. Donations can be made to the IOU treasurer or on-line through the IOU website. Doug also reported that Bruce Ehresman recommends the IOU sign on to co-nominate the Effigy Mounds/Yellow River State Forest area as a globally important bird area, specifically for conservation of Red-shouldered Hawk, Cerulean Warbler, and Wood Thrush.

Tom Schilke announced that first time attendees would be presented with the book *Birds in Iowa*, and that first time IOU attendees would be introduced later at the banquet.

President Roisen mentioned that the board will be discussing the treasurer's position, which requires specialized skills and storage/handling of important financial documents and tax forms. Limiting the term of the treasurer's position can be problematic. Correcting for this may require changing the organization's constitution.

The next IOU meeting will be held 3-5 May in the Waterloo/Cedar Falls area. Many details are still to be determined.

John Rutenbeck moved to adjourn. Bill Scheible seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Meeting was adjourned at 5:14 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Stuart Sparkman, secretary

Iowa Ornithologists' Union Board Meeting

25 August 2012

The IOU spring board meeting was held at the Fischer Community Center, Marshalltown, Iowa. President Paul Roisen called the meeting to order at 5:25 p.m. Also in attendance were Tom Schilke, vice-president; Stuart Sparkman, secretary; Mary Beth Hunt, treasurer; and board members Don Brown, Keith Dyche, Karen Viste-Sparkman and Dennis Thompson. Treasurer emeritus Doug Hunt attended in an advisory capacity.

Welcome: President Paul Roisen thanked the board for being here to serve the IOU, and welcomed new board members Stuart Sparkman, secretary, and Mary Beth Hunt, treasurer.

Secretary's Report: The secretary was not required to read the minutes to the previous meeting to the board. As board members had received said minutes in electronic form in advance of this meeting. Don Brown moved to dispense with reading the minutes. Karen Viste-Sparkman seconded. No additions or corrections to the previous minutes were offered. Minutes were approved by unanimous consent.

Treasurer's Report: Mary Beth Hunt reported that the total checking, savings, and CD balance as of 31 July 2012 is \$58,836.40. Income is up approximately \$4,000 and expenses are up approximately \$6,300 over the same time period last year. IOU should meet or be under the net loss budgeted for 2012 (\$10,000, of which \$8,000 was designated for Conservation/Projects). The board allowed an additional \$3,000 (above the budgeted \$5,000) for the Projects Committee due to an unusually high number of high quality projects and our large bank balance. In the treasurer's report, lines 6100 and 6110 are not fairly

compared with the previous year because we are behind in publications (2 for 3, 3 for 2).

Donations are down from members. Line 7000 "other expenses" refers to the trade show displays. Dick Stillwell and John Rutenbeck were asked to do an IOU audit for 2011. This is expected to be completed before the next board meeting.

Board of Directors action since spring meeting: In June 2012, President Paul Roisen invited the IOU Board of Directors to deliberate about whether the IOU could be used as a vehicle for contributing to Southern Wings. Shane Patterson had presented information on the Southern Wings program to the membership at the spring 2012 meeting in Iowa City. Paul informed the board that donors were already waiting for this board action in order to use IOU to contribute to this endeavor. Karen Viste-Sparkman moved that IOU receive designated contributions to be used as the IOU donation to the program to be matched up to \$1,000 with funds from our treasury. Tom Schilke seconded the motion. Motion carried 8-0 with one abstaining and one not responding.

Membership Coordinator: No board discussion.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Records: No board discussion.

Publications: It was suggested that we advertise on the IOU website and list-serv for help with editing and submissions. President Roisen will consult with Steve Dinsmore about how he would like to solicit help. It was noted that we can lose members if our publications were to start to decline. More discussion on this will occur at the winter board meeting.

Projects: No board discussion.

Membership: See new business.

Library/Historical: No board discussion.

NEW BUSINESS

Treasurer duties: This item comes from the president. Mary Beth Hunt explained that the treasurer's job is very specialized, requiring special software and knowledge of tax code. This is potentially problematic if the office turns over with any frequency. President Roisen offered three possible options for the board.

1. No action.
2. Remove term limits for treasurer's office only.
3. Contract out the treasurer's duties to an outside party.

Don Brown asked whether Mary Beth Hint is willing to continue as treasurer, with Doug Hunt in an advisory capacity. She indicated their willingness to do so. Don then moved option #2 which will require a change in the IOU constitution. Keith Dyche seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

Proposed constitutional amend-

ment to Article IV, Section 2: The second sentence shall be amended to read "After serving two consecutive terms (excluding partial terms), a member is not eligible for reelection to the same office, *other than the office of treasurer*, until one full term has elapsed."

Proposed amendment will be published in an IOU regular publication, and is expected to be voted on by the membership at the spring 2013 meeting.

Membership Committee bylaw change request: The membership committee voted to delete the term limit for committee membership in the committee's bylaws. The board was required to approve or deny.

Mary Beth Hunt moved that the board accept the committee's recommendation of said bylaw change. Dennis Thompson seconded. The motion was unanimously approved.

Secondly, the membership committee requested board approval to change its name to "Membership and Promotions Committee". Stuart Sparkman moved to approve. Don Brown seconded. The motion was unanimously approved. It was noted that this does not involve a change in the constitution, and therefore a vote of the general membership is not required.

Thirdly, the board discussed the request by Doug Harr that the IOU sign on to co-nominate the Effigy Mounds/Yellow River State Forest area as a globally important bird area, as addressed in the general business meeting. Mary Beth Hunt so moved. Don Brown seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Next Board meeting: President Roisen will schedule a winter board/budget meeting. Financial issues and publications will be key discussion topics. He will survey board members to determine where and when. Mary Beth Hunt has offered to host this meeting in Oskaloosa.

Stuart Sparkman moved to adjourn. Don Brown seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Meeting was adjourned at 6:24 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,
Stuart Sparkman, secretary

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP DUES (renewable yearly): Fledgling (students) \$15, Institutional \$45, Foreign \$35, Goldfinch \$30, Bluebird \$35, Oriole \$50, Egret \$75, Osprey \$100, Bald Eagle \$250, and Peregrine Falcon \$500+. Membership dues entitle members to receive *Iowa Bird Life* and *IOU News* quarterly and to vote and hold office in the Union. Contributions are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law. Join, give a gift, or manage your membership on-line at <www.iowabirds.org>. Paper forms for new members and renewals may be mailed to the treasurer. Back issues of *Iowa Bird Life* are available from Membership Coordinator Pam Allen, 7955 Wistful Vista Dr., #20, West Des Moines, IA 50266 (2birders@hickorytech.net).

INSTRUCTIONS TO AUTHORS: Original manuscripts, notes, letters (indicate if for publication), editorials, and other material relating to birds in Iowa should be sent by e-mail attachment in Microsoft Word to editor. Research manuscripts should include abstract, introduction, study area, methods, results, discussion, and literature cited sections and will be sent for peer review. Accepted manuscripts will be published promptly depending on space available.

Photos and graphics: Submit only original, unsized, and unenhanced photos in your camera's JPEG (*.jpg) format. Photos must be 300 dpi at the size they will be printed (6-1/2" wide by 6-1/2" high for the cover and various smaller sizes inside), so setting your camera to its highest possible resolution is recommended. The editor will do any resizing and enhancing required because any previous adjustments to the photos may make them unusable. Submit photos and graphics as e-mail attachments.

E-mail all material other than seasonal reports to editor at cootjr@iastate.edu. Deadlines for submission are **January 1 for winter issue (Vol. xx[1])**, **April 1 for spring issue [2]**, **July 1 for summer issue [3]**, **October 1 for fall issue [4]**. Send seasonal field reports to field reports editors by deadlines listed on inside front cover.

IOU News Co-editors: John and Anna Bissell, 328 SE Cedarwood Drive, Grimes, IA 50111-1143 (John.annabissell@gmail.com)

IOU WEB SITE: <www.iowabirds.org>, Ann Johnson, Webmaster

IOWA RBA: John Bissell (john.annabissell@gmail.com)

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT: Deadline for receipt of reports is 15 January. For forms and instructions, contact Christopher J. Caster, 4 South Ridge Ct., Coralville, IA 52241 (cjcaster@earthlink.net).

BIRD SIGHTINGS: Subscribe at <www.iowabirds.org>

ADDRESS CHANGES: Update your on-line profile at <www.iowabirds.org> or send address and e-mail changes to Membership Coordinator Pam Allen, 7955 Wistful Vista Dr., #20, West Des Moines, IA 50266 (2birders@hickorytech.net).

UPCOMING MEETINGS OF THE IOWA ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION: Spring: 3–5 May 2013, Waterloo.

FRONT COVER PHOTO: Snowy Owl, Linn, 8 January 2012. Photograph by Jim Scheib, Iowa City, IA.

BACK COVER PHOTO: Prothonotary Warbler, Brenton Slough, Dallas, 13 May 2012. Photograph by Mark Brown, Iowa City, IA.

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